SEPTEMBER 2009
$4.99

THE PAIN & PRIDE OF RAFAEL SORIANO

Finally Healthy, The Unflappable Closer
Is Displaying An Aura Of Invincibility

ChopTalk

THE OFFICIAL MONTHLY MAGAZINE
OF THE ATLANTA BRAVES

PLUS
Q&A With Tommy Hanson
Jurrjens: A Star Without Status
Greg Maddux's Big Day

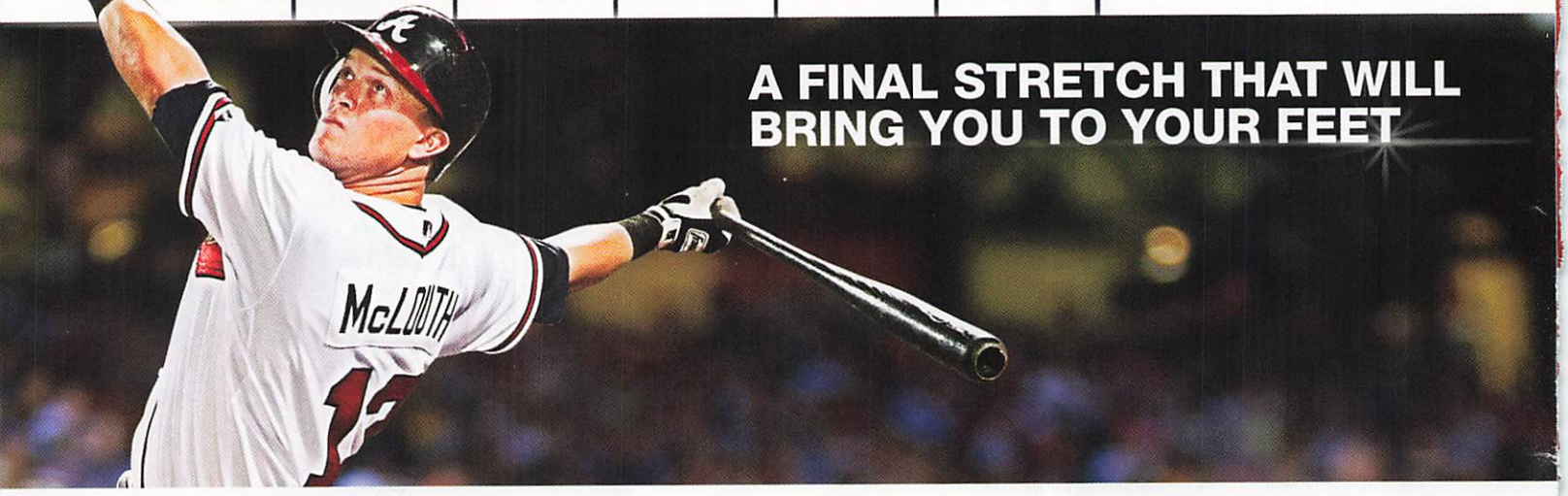
PRADO LATCHES ONTO OPPORTUNITY WITH HIT, AFTER HIT, AFTER HIT...

A MAN WHOSE TIME HAS COME

Special Report
ChopTalk Takes You On The Most Unlikely Talent Search Ever
The New Frontier

www.braves.com/choptalk
$4
09
0 71486 02759 1

THE THRILL OF TURNER FIELD



SEPTEMBER

4 FRIDAY 7:30 PM
CINCINNATI REDS

Roberto Clemente Night
Publix Friday Night Fireworks
Spectacular post-game fireworks display

5 SATURDAY 7:00 PM
CINCINNATI REDS

College, Military & AAA Discounts
2-for-1 Upper Box tickets with student, service or AAA ID

6 SUNDAY 1:30 PM
CINCINNATI REDS

Bark in the Park
Take your dog to the ballpark
Hispanic Expo Day

15 TUESDAY 7:00 PM
NEW YORK METS

Coca-Cola 2-for-1 Tuesday
Buy one get one FREE Upper Reserved tickets

16 WEDNESDAY 7:00 PM
NEW YORK METS

Public Safety Night
A salute to public service officials
2-for-1 Wednesday Discount

17 THURSDAY 7:00 PM
NEW YORK METS

The Home Depot Mystery Gift Card Giveaway

18 FRIDAY 7:30 PM
PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES

Hispanic Heritage Night
Publix Friday Night Fireworks
Spectacular post-game fireworks display

19 SATURDAY 7:00 PM
PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES

Breast Cancer Awareness
Scotts Lawn & Garden Night
Presented by The Home Depot

20 SUNDAY 1:30 PM
PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES

All-Star Sunday
Pregame Alumni Meet & Greet and Kids Run the Bases Following the Game

28 MONDAY 7:00 PM
FLORIDA MARLINS

Braves Buck Night
$1 tickets

29 TUESDAY 7:00 PM
FLORIDA MARLINS

Coca-Cola 2-for-1 Tuesday
Buy one get one FREE Upper Reserved tickets

30 WEDNESDAY 7:00 PM
FLORIDA MARLINS

2-for-1 Wednesday Ticket Discount
Buy one get one FREE Field/Terrace Pavilion

OCTOBER

1 THURSDAY 7:00 PM
WASHINGTON NATIONALS

College, Military & AAA Discounts
2-for-1 Upper Box tickets with student, service or AAA ID

2 FRIDAY 7:30 PM
WASHINGTON NATIONALS

Fan Appreciation & Braves Foundation Weekend

3 SATURDAY 7:00 PM
WASHINGTON NATIONALS

Fan Appreciation Weekend
Braves Foundation Weekend

4 SUNDAY 1:30 PM
WASHINGTON NATIONALS

Fan Appreciation & Braves Foundation Weekend

Creedence Clearwater Revisited
Post-game concert presented by DELTA

1.800.745.3000 **braves.com/tickets**

© 2009, Atlanta National League Baseball Club, Inc. All rights reserved. ™ The Braves script and tomahawk are trademarks of the Atlanta National League Baseball Club, Inc. All rights reserved.

Braves

BATTING ORDER

SEPTEMBER 2009

POWER HITTERS

6-16
SPECIAL REPORT: THE NEW FRONTIER
ChopTalk Takes You On The Most Unlikely Talent Search Ever
By Patty Rasmussen

6-12
OLD WORLD ADVENTURE
On A Distant Island In The Atlantic Sits A Ballfield
Where The Braves Are Trying To Find Big Leaguers By Patty Rasmussen

13
THE SPANIARD
Teen Shortstop Alejandro Sanchez
Is First From His Country To Sign By Patty Rasmussen

14-16
FANTASY ISLAND
Baseball Is Baseball, Even In This Most Unlikely
Of Diamond Locales By Patty Rasmussen

24-26
PLAYING PEPPER
Tommy Hanson Answers Our Questions About Life Before -
And Since - His Arrival In The Majors Interview By Patty Rasmussen

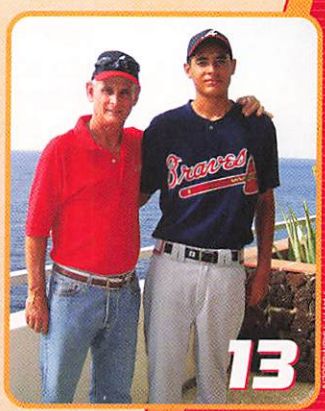
28-30
THE PAIN & PRIDE OF RAFAEL SORIANO
Finally Healthy, Unflappable Closer's Displaying
An Aura Of Invincibility By Jon Cooper

34-36
A MAN WHOSE TIME HAS COME
Martin Prado Latches Onto Opportunity With Hit,
After Hit, After Hit...By Gary Caruso

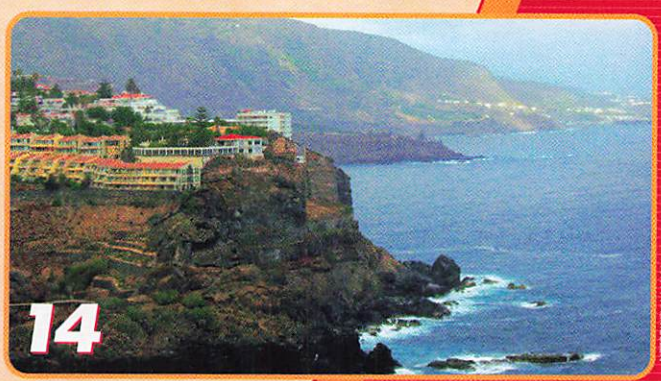
38-40
STAR WITHOUT STATUS
Soaking Up Lessons From Veterans Like A "Sponge,"
Jurrjens Is Pitching With Remarkable Consistency For A 23-Year-Old
By Gary Caruso

41-43
"THE BEST THERE'S EVER BEEN"
Greg Maddux Receives Franchise's Ultimate Honors
In Words, Induction, And Number Retirement
By Mark Bowman of MLB.com

PATTY RASMUSSEN

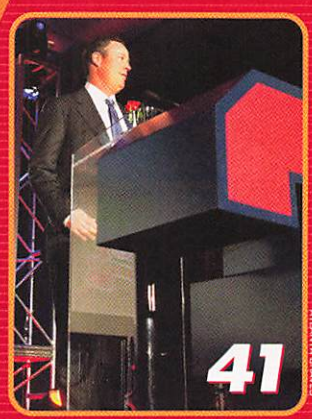


PATTY RASMUSSEN



PATTY RASMUSSEN

ATLANTA BRAVES



ATLANTA BRAVES

COVER CREDITS
MARTIN PRADO
Courtesy of the Atlanta Braves

Design by Clark Odom

BATTING ORDER

SEPTEMBER 2009

SINGLES HITTERS

18-19 SCOREBOARD
20-21 BUNTS & BASEHITS
22-23 OFF THE FIELD
31 BEHIND THE NUMBERS | By Steve Fall
54-55 HEROES & HISTORY
High School Ballpark That Al Spangler Built In Houston Now Bears His Name
By Brian Knapp
56 ALUMNI NOTES
58-59 BEYOND BASEBALL | By Patty Rasmussen
60-61 TALKIN' CHOP
62 XTRA INNINGS
Peter Moylan: The Wonder From Down Under
By Gary Caruso

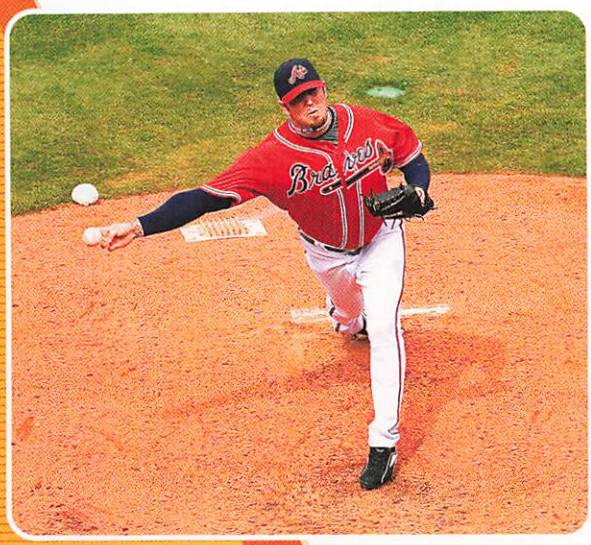
PITCHERS

17 PAINTING THE CORNERS | By Jay Busbee
21 FRANK WREN
23 BOBBY COX
36 BATTER UP! | By Ryan Church
40 AROUND BASEBALL | By Ken Rosenthal
57 GARY CARUSO
61 JOHNNY SAJEM'S CARTOON

PINCH-HITTERS

49 TICKET INFO
50 2009 SCHEDULE CALENDAR
ROSTER
51 INDIVIDUAL STATS
52-53 GAME BY GAME
55 HOW DO THEY DO THAT? | By Steve Fall
56 BIRTHDAYS
62 FAN CLUBS GUIDE

62



ATLANTA BRAVES

ON DECK

44-48 FARM SYSTEM ROUNDUP | By Bill Ballew
45 DOWN ON THE FARM By Mycal Jones
46 TOP PROSPECTS
47-48 FARM TEAM INDIVIDUAL STATS

VOLUME 5, NUMBER 9

CHOPTALK USPS Periodicals Publication 022-732; ISSN 1555-1547 is published monthly for $37.95 per year ($56.95 Canada and Mexico; $76.95 other international; payment in U.S. dollars only) by Wonderdog Publishing, Inc.

Copyright 2009 with all rights reserved. Reproduction or use, without permission, of any content, in whole or part - in any manner - is prohibited.

Office of publication is located at 12829 Trinity Dr., Stafford, Tex. 77477-4214. Visit Braves.com/ChopTalk. E-mail Letters@ChopTalkonline.com. This is the Official Monthly Magazine of the Atlanta Braves. Single copy price is $4.99. Periodical postage paid at Stafford, Tex., and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Please send address changes and returns to: ChopTalk, P.O. Box 81247, Conyers, Ga. 30013-9247.

THE EXCITEMENT OF

TURNER FIELD

GROUP TICKETS

Looking to get a group together to check out the Braves? September brings some of the Braves biggest rivals to Turner Field. Great seats still available for the Mets, Marlins and Phillies!

For more information visit braves.com/groups or call 404.577.9100 to speak with a Braves representative.

NEW 6-GAME PACK INCLUDES 2010 OPENING DAY

The new 6-Game Plan includes 5 selected home games for the final months of the 2009 regular season, plus tickets for Opening Day for 2010!

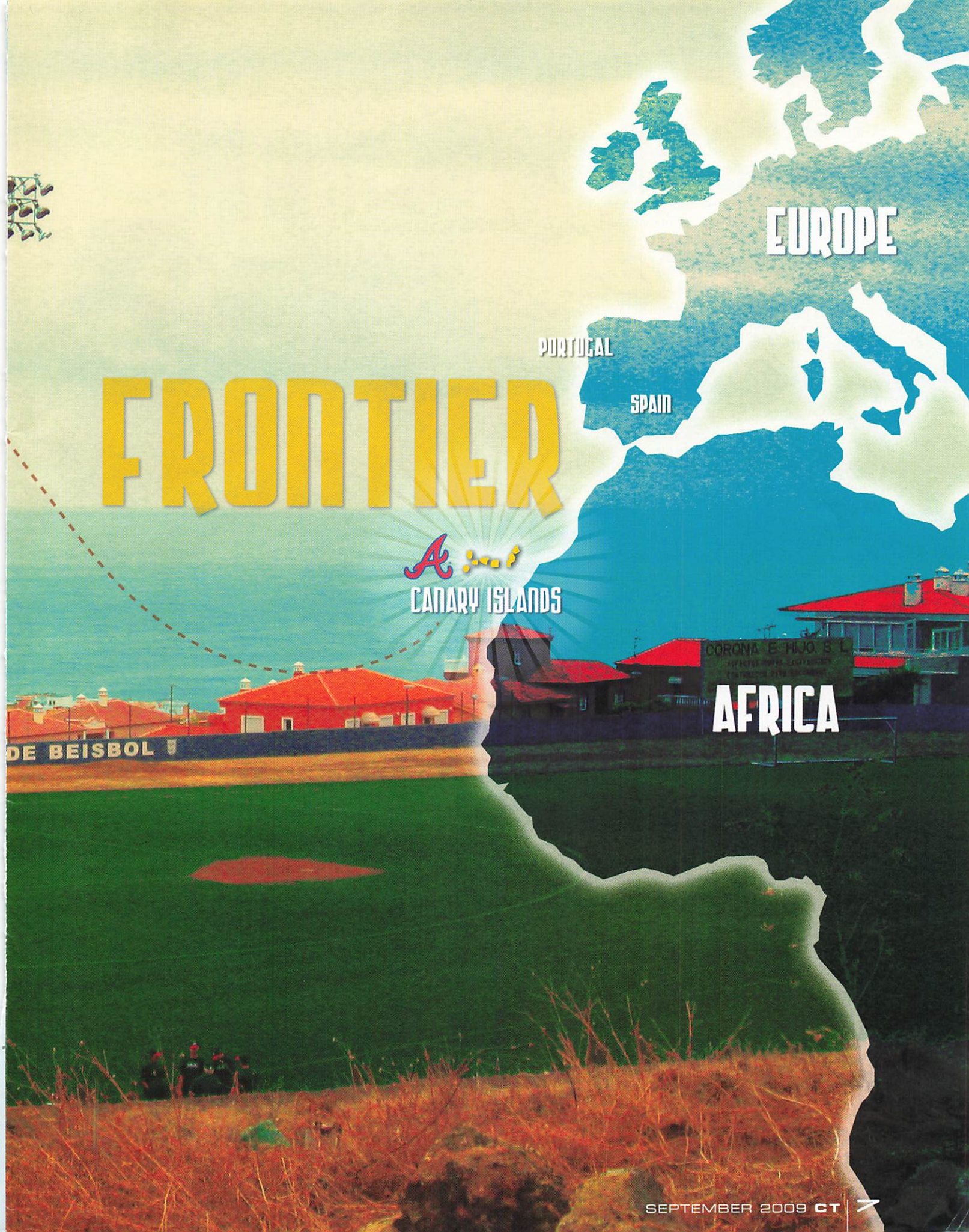
For more information visit braves.com/tickets

1.800.745.3000 **braves.com/tickets**

© 2009, Atlanta National League Baseball Club, Inc. All rights reserved. ™ The Braves script and tomahawk are trademarks of the Atlanta National League Baseball Club, Inc. All rights reserved.

Braves

USA
ATLANTA
CHOPTALK TAKES YOU
ON THE MOST UNLIKELY
TALENT SEARCH EVER
THE NEW
CENTRO INSULAR


EUROPE
PORTUGAL
SPAIN
FRONTIER
CANARY ISLANDS
AFRICA
DE BEISBOL

FINDING FUTURE MAJOR LEAGUERS on the sandlots of the world is a never-ending, all-consuming task that requires vast resources in personnel and budget. It's also a highly competitive endeavor that, in its own way, is just as aggressive among the 30 franchises in Major League Baseball as is trying to win the World Series.

The Braves stepped up that competition to find players a notch - or more - on Feb. 22 when they became the first MLB team to open a facility to develop prospects in Europe (April '09 CT). In order to inform ChopTalk readers - the best Braves fans in the world - about the extent this organization goes to in order to find players that hopefully will help win championships in the future, we sent reporter Patty Rasmussen to the Braves' new European academy for five days in mid-July.

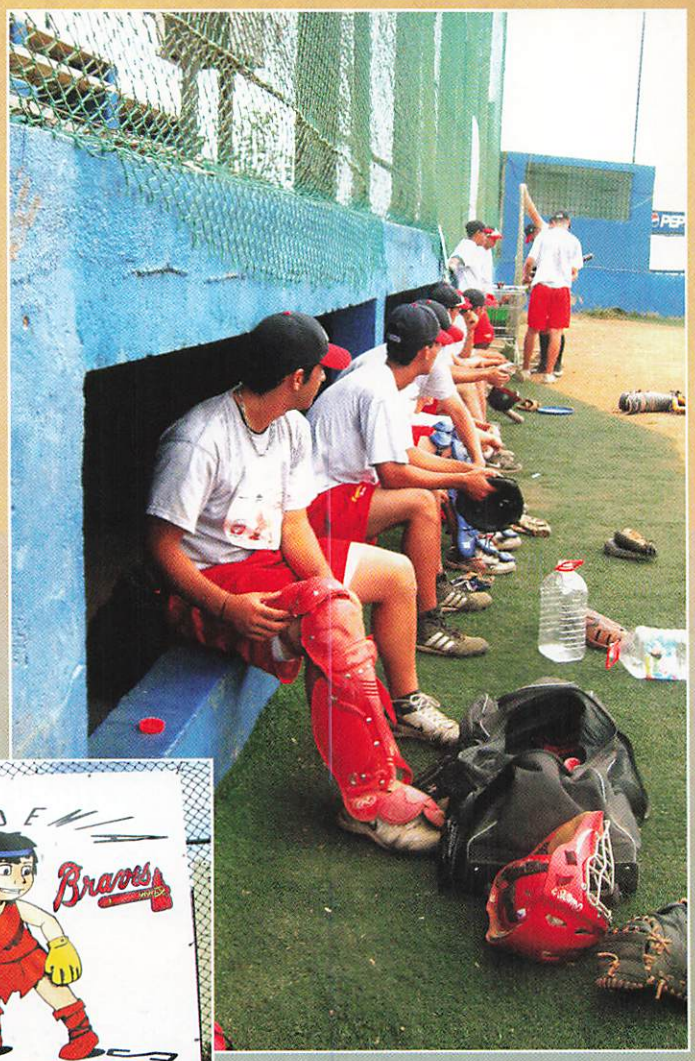
The academy is located on Spanish soil, but actually is found on the island of Tenerife in the Canary Islands, only 40 miles off the northwest corner of Africa.

It may seem like an unusual place to find and develop players now, but much the same could be said for Japan and other Asian countries, not to mention Australia, in the past. That's no longer the case, and the Braves have a jump start on talent on the European continent where the popularity of baseball is mushrooming.

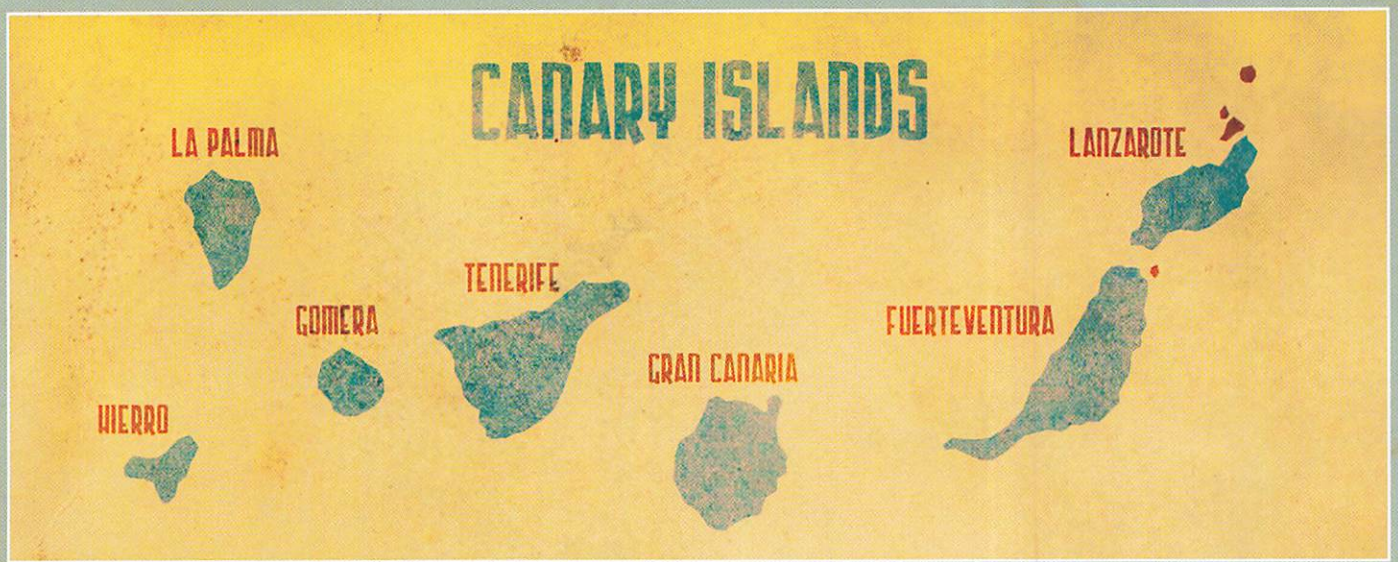
While Rasmussen was in Tenerife, the Braves signed Alejandro Sanchez, their first player from Spain. In the following Special Report that will continue next month, you'll learn much more about the Braves' unique undertaking in Tenerife, as well as the hopes and dreams of players like Sanchez and the men who are helping them pursue their common baseball dream of playing at Turner Field.

That dream is portrayed in the academy's logo (R) that features a native boy or "guanches" wearing a blue headband, holding a yellow baseball glove, and throwing a white baseball - the colors of the Canary Islands flag. The logo of the Spanish Baseball Federation is behind him, representing where he is now, and the Braves' logo is in front of him, representing his goal. Perhaps someday he'll even help the Braves win a World Series.

- GARY CARUSO



The dugouts at the academy are stark, but the players who are invited for 3- to 4-week sessions are some of the best the Braves can find in Europe, where baseball popularity is mushrooming.



OLD WORLD ADVENTURE

ON A DISTANT ISLAND IN THE ATLANTIC, NESTLED BETWEEN THE OCEAN AND A SLEEPY VOLCANO, SITS A BALLFIELD WHERE THE BRAVES ARE TRYING TO FIND BIG LEAGUERS

STORIES AND PHOTOS BY PATTY RASMUSSEN

HOW FAR WILL THE ATLANTA BRAVES GO to find and develop top-notch baseball talent? Try 4,080 miles, the distance from Atlanta to Puerto de la Cruz, Tenerife, in the Canary Islands, a group of seven islands that are part of Spain but are located off the northwest coast of Africa.

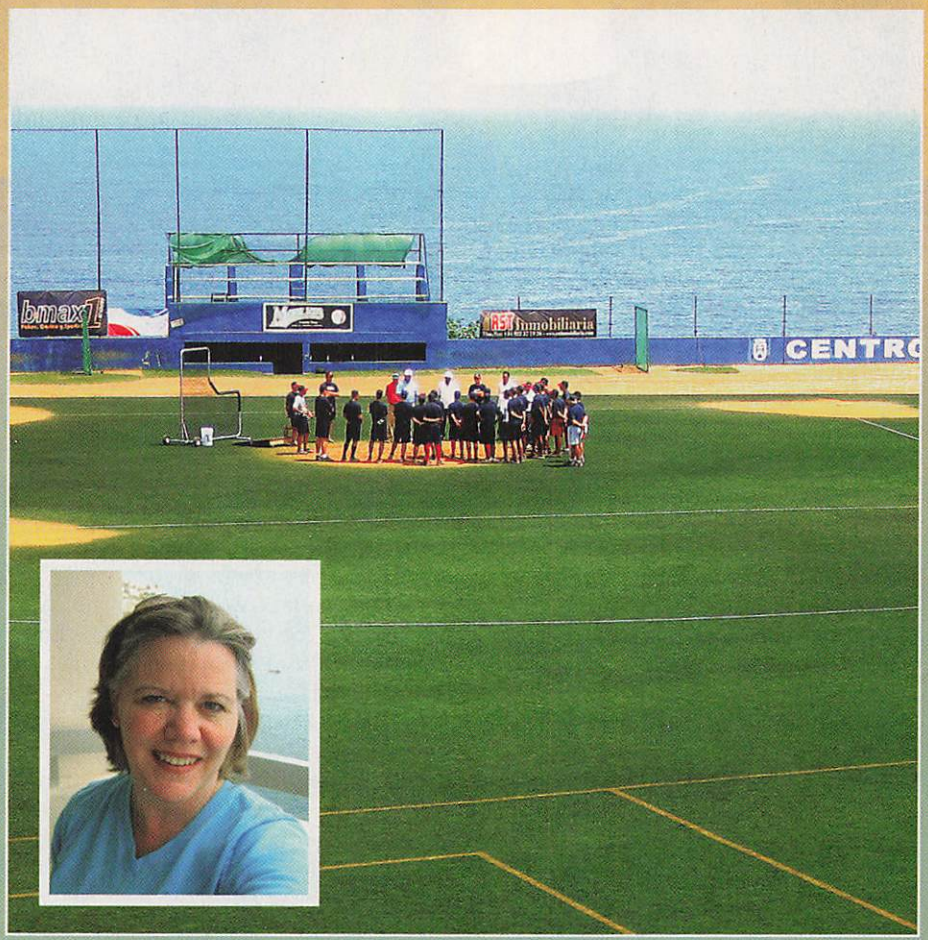
Nestled on a rocky hillside, with a sleeping volcano and banana plantations on one side and the pounding Atlantic Ocean on the other, sits the Campo Municipal "El Burgado," the County Stadium located in the Burgado area, home to the Braves Academia Prospectos. The Braves Baseball Academy is where elite baseball players are invited to attend 3- to 4-week sessions, several times during the year, honing their skills with coaches from the Braves and the Major League Baseball Envoy Program.

The academy has already produced a harvest. Two prospects, Ruben Rijkhof from Holland and Alejandro Sanchez from Valencia, Spain, have signed contracts with the Braves. Both players were scouted by the founder of the academy, Braves scout Nestor Perez Sr.

If locating baseball prospects in Europe seems far-fetched, think again. Baseball is growing by leaps and bounds in Europe. Every country has its own baseball federation, and MLB has been sending coaches there since 1991. In establishing their own academy - the first of its kind in Europe by an MLB franchise - the Braves are merely keeping a step or two ahead of the competition and dipping into a largely untapped pool of baseball potential.

A couple of factors create the expanding talent base in Europe. The unstable political climate in some Latin American and Caribbean countries has caused an exodus of families, including ballplayers that would normally have been scouted in their home countries, immigrating or seeking political asylum in European countries.

"You've got a high concentration of the Dominican population in Valencia (Spain)," said Johnny Almaraz, director of international scouting and operations for the Braves. "You've got Dominicans, Venezuelans, Colombians, Central Americans, in the Barcelona region which is Catalan. They're playing baseball more and more."

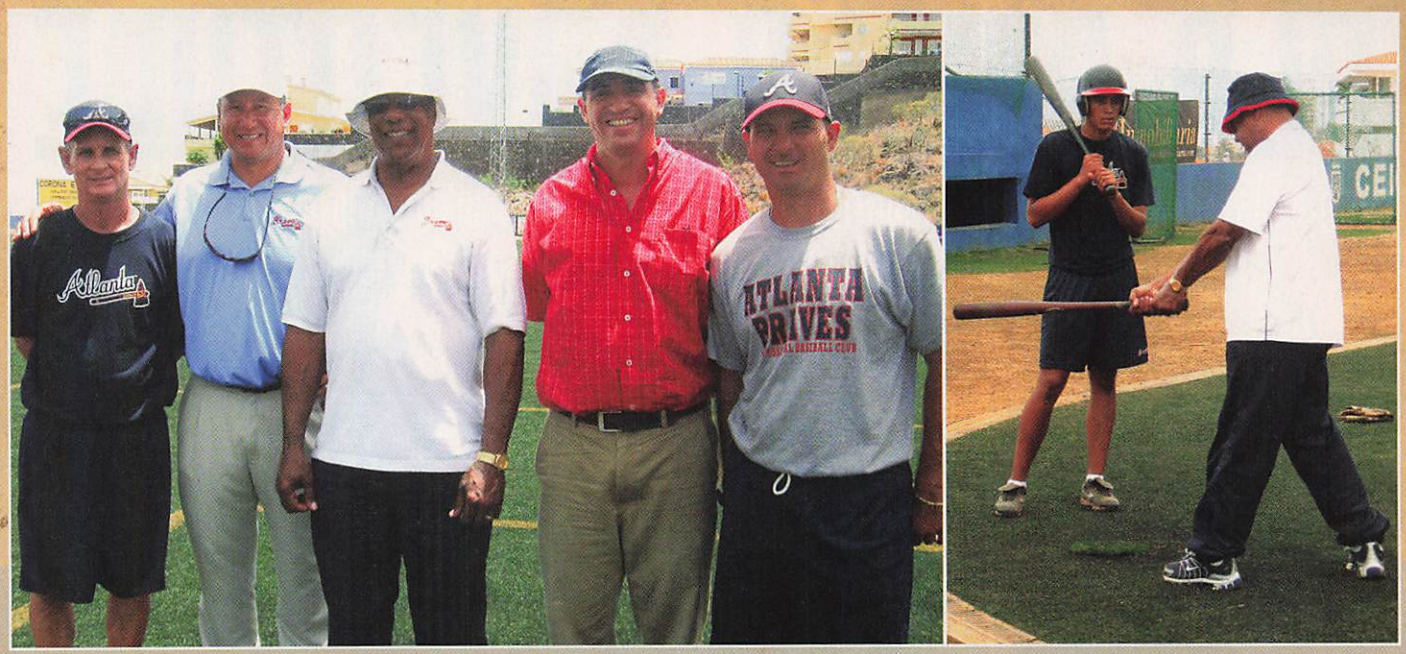


With the Atlantic Ocean as a backdrop, Atlanta front office executives Johnny Almaraz, Jose Martinez, and Rolando Petit speak to the players attending the Braves' European Baseball Academy in the Canary Islands, where ChopTalk's Patty Rasmussen (inset) spent five days compiling stories and photos for this issue and next month's.

The immigration patterns are ironic as many of these families are one or two generations removed from their Spanish heritage, their families having fled the authoritarian regime of Francisco Franco, who controlled Spain for 40 years until his death in 1975.

Whatever the impetus, Spain has become a significant player in European baseball. The Spanish national team is currently ranked third behind the Netherlands and Italy. And baseball is especially popular in the Canary Islands, in part because of the success of Spain's five-time King's Cup champion Puerto de la Cruz Marlins, a

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



The founder of the Braves' European Academy, Nestor Perez Sr. (L) and his son Nestico (R) who is the director of the facility, pose with visiting Atlanta officials (L-R) Johnny Almaraz, Jose Martinez and Rolando Petit. Martinez (photo at right), a special assistant to the GM and assistant director of international scouting/operations, gives a few tips to newly signed shortstop Alejandro Sanchez of Valencia, Spain.

team that was founded in 1997 by Perez, himself a Cuban immigrant.

In addition to the professional team, the Marlins also field a men's softball team and baseball teams for "junior" (under-21), "cadete" (young men), and "infantile," (young children). The success of baseball in Tenerife, combined with the cooperation of the Canary and Royal Spanish Federations of Baseball and Softball, and the availability of the Marlins' baseball facility made establishing the Braves academy in Puerto de la Cruz an easy decision for the Braves.

"The local federation provides infrastructure - the stadium, a lot of the on-the-field equipment (batting cage, pitching machine, bats and balls) - and we supply uniforms and some of the sports wear," said Almaraz. "Our biggest contribution is the instruction we bring to them and the knowledge of the preparation and development of young kids. Nestor is under contract to the Atlanta Braves. The other coaches are employed on a seasonal basis at the Academy. They're paid through the baseball federations - Canary Island and Spanish."

Perez's son, Nestor Jr., called "Nestico," serves as the director of the Braves academy. Nestico played professionally in the Tampa Bay Rays minor league system for seven years (1998 to 2005), but has achieved great success both as a player/manager for the Puerto de la Cruz Marlins and as the captain and starting shortstop of the Spanish national team.

In addition to the Perezes, the academy employs a pitching coach, Leslie Nacar, and a fielding coach, Danny Martinez, both of whom play for the Marlins. The staff is rounded out by physical therapist Antonio de Paz, who serves as a combination conditioning coach and athletic trainer, working out with players at a local gym.

During the four-week academy session in July, two coaches from the MLB Envoy program were also on hand to assist the academy coaches. Jim Jones, a former college baseball coach and 20-year veteran of the Envoy program with extensive European experience, worked primarily with pitchers, while Stan Luketich, head baseball coach at Desert Vista High School in Phoenix, Arizona, worked with position players at the academy. Jones, who has worked with several of the academy players at other times, is highly complimentary of the Braves academy.

"They have a very good setup here," he said. "They've got good coaches, and Nestico has valuable major league experience."

The stadium is an older facility with few amenities. The field has an artificial surface, which must be watered every day so it doesn't become brittle. The field is surrounded by a chain-link fence. In addition to the white lines of a baseball field, it is also painted for use as a soccer field. Portable soccer goals are tucked away beyond the outfield fence, next to the batting cage.

Two cinderblock dugouts are best described as Spartan by any definition. Behind each dugout are two sets of cinderblock and concrete bleachers, open at the back with no railings. A "chirinquito" or snack stand made of metal sits to one side, next to a set of bleachers. Forget about getting a hotdog and Coke, because this concession stand sells empanadas, a half-moon shaped, fried pie filled with meat or cheese, and Pepsi to wash it down.

Like any community baseball program, the baseball academy relies on help from volunteers such as Reto Piva, a local business owner who also manages the website for the Canary Islands baseball federation. His 16-year-old son, Diego, is a player in the academy, so naturally Piva helps however he can. He takes team photos and action shots during the games and brings in sound equipment in order to play pre-game music and sound effects - including the familiar Atlanta Braves chant and the "Charge!" music. Piva often serves as official scorer, as well.

Jose "Cheo" Pena, originally from Venezuela, played college baseball in Tennessee, and is another volunteer assisting Piva with setting up loudspeakers and serving as the plate umpire at a scrimmage game between the players from the academy and the Marlins.

Christi Perez, Nestor's wife, handles much of the paperwork, printing copies of official documents and making sure the right person gets the appropriate copy.

Other folks pitch in, as well, working in the concession stand, fetching water, or carrying baseball equipment.

Players come to the academy by invitation only. There are currently 18 players participating, some from Tenerife or one of the other islands, others from the Spanish mainland. Out-of-town players stay at the Hotel Maritime, a resort hotel just 200 feet down the hill from the stadium.

Their days start at 8 a.m. with breakfast at the hotel followed by workouts at the stadium beginning at 9 and continuing until 2 in the afternoon. The players generally begin each day gathered around the pitcher's mound while Nestico offers "notes" from the previous day's workout or scrimmage game. He doesn't hesitate to call out a player if necessary.

"We literally are teaching guys when to hold a guy on first," said Jim Jones, commenting on something Nestico said to his players. "Nestico is teaching, and this kid is telling why he did what he did. Everyone has an excuse. It's a universal problem."

After the meeting, the players jog around the field and do a few stretching exercises and warmups under the direction of Antonio de Paz. It's a routine much like Braves spring training at Disney, and after about 15 minutes, the players break into groups. Pitchers walk over to the fence to do some resistance stretches using bungee cords attached to the fence. Fielders spread out for long toss. Nestico calls out distances in English and in Spanish - 60 feet, 90, then 120 - while Stan Luketich calls out encouragement and instruction.

"Good, good," he yelled. "Everything starts from your right foot. Now you have a base to throw from."

Once the players warm up, they begin more focused instruction. Danny Martinez, 22, works with a group of outfielders going for balls near the wall. The teaching is basic. He instructed them to communicate to the player going for the ball, telling them to shout, "Bien, bien, bien!" (Good, good, good!), then switching to "Mano, mano, mano!" (Hand, hand, hand) so the player will know to reach out for the wall. They run through the drill until everyone has done it.

Meanwhile, Jim and Leslie Nacar worked with pitchers. Jim described the drill in English, and one of the players, Diego Piva, translated for the others.

"You're going to throw the weighted ball backwards over your head, and I'll put the radar gun on you," said Jim. "You'll toss it 10 times."

The pitchers also stood on a balance board, throwing a weighted ball at a spot marked on the side of the building where the equipment is stored.

"Use maximum velocity," said Jim. "Attaboy, Luis! Way to go!"

Luketich worked on signs with catchers. He set up one player on the first base side, another on the third base side, while he stood on the pitcher's mound and told the catcher to put down his sign. If one of the other players saw the sign, they told Stan, who in turn told the catcher to close up his knees.

"Your knee is in the Atlantic Ocean," yelled Stan. "Close up!"

Throughout the infield and outfield drills, the coaches continually stressed speed, footwork, and, above all, communication. Finally they called, "Agua! (Water!)," and the players headed to the dugout for a break.

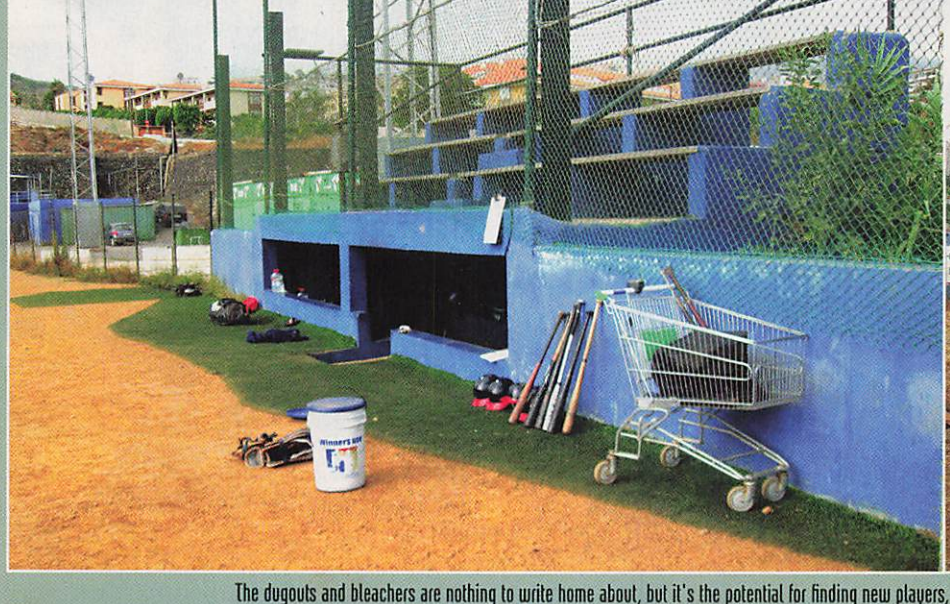
Stan high-fived players heading in and said, "Don't miss me!" when a player slipped by without shaking hands.

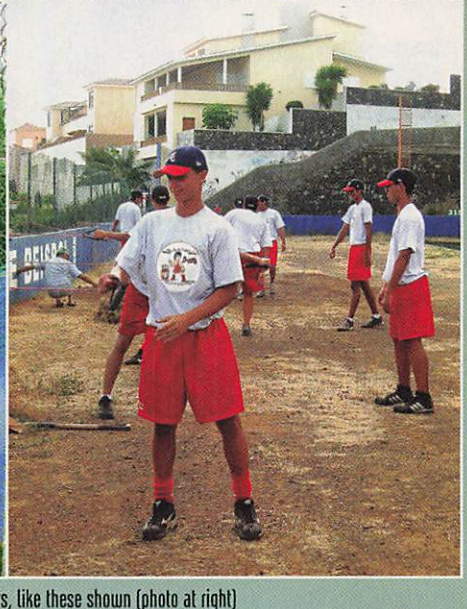
Nestor and Nestico shared batting practice pitching duties as all the players took their turns in the cage. Occasionally, Jim or Stan pulled a player aside to instruct about hand placement or keeping the bat level.

The players are focused on the task at hand. They know they are among the elite players in Spain. At the end of the workout, Nestico pulled the players together for a final talk. He reminded them, emphatically, to concentrate on working hard and not to waste time goofing off.

After the players were dismissed, they collected their gear and walked wearily back to the hotel. There are no clubhouse attendants doing daily laundry, so the players who live on the island take the dirty practice clothing belonging to their teammates home with them. They'll bring back the clean t-shirts and shorts the next day. Back at the hotel, players usually spend the afternoon napping, in the pool, or sitting in the hotel lobby using the hotel's wireless internet connection. Dinner is at 8:45 p.m., early by European standards, and their curfew is 11:30.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE





The dugouts and bleachers are nothing to write home about, but it's the potential for finding new players, like these shown (photo at right) warming up with resistance bands attached to the fence, that excites the Braves.

"Jim and Stan check on them at curfew," said Danny. "We haven't had any problems. They know they are here for baseball and nothing else."

The next day's workout followed the same schedule, but special visitors from the Braves - Johnny Almaraz, Jose Martinez and Rolando Petit, assistant director of Latin American operations - visited the complex to watch the workout and see how the academy was progressing. All three men addressed the players, but it's Martinez, special assistant to general manager Frank Wren and assistant to Almaraz, who pulled out all the stops and spoke passionately to the players about the need to make the most of their opportunity.

"You don't need to have talent to hustle," he said. "You must give your best effort every day."

Martinez encouraged the players to practice speaking English, telling them to learn three new phrases everyday.

"You build your talent everyday," he added. "Learn something new everyday, too."

In addition to energizing the young players, the presence of Braves personnel brought out the local media. Radio reporter Wilson Morena is a panel member of a Monday through Friday, hour-long radio program called "PuroBeisbol" (Pure Baseball). Morena recorded interviews with Almaraz, Martinez and Petit for a later broadcast. PuroBeisbol is an important member of the baseball community, since the station also broadcasts Marlins games via the internet to the other islands, increasing baseball's profile in the Canaries.

Meanwhile, Almaraz watched the players go through their drills.

"We know we're going to need to make some minor adjustments in the way (the coaches) are doing things," he said. "We want to make sure the instruction that's going on here is in line with the way we're teaching at every level in our organization."

The Braves also share with coaches what the Braves are looking for in players that will turn them into prospects.

"Some of our instructors have been in Tenerife already and have given coaching clinics for coaches who will be here, as well as instruction to the kids who are in the academy," he added.

Later that night, the academy coaching staff, players, Braves officials, and MLB coaches gathered at the Hotel Maritime for a special presentation to Milagros Luis Brito, the head of the Department of Education, Universities, Culture & Sports of the government of the Canary Islands. An influential member of the government, Brito is an enthusiastic supporter of the baseball academy. She spoke glowingly about the importance of the partnership between the Atlanta Braves organization and the Canary Islands and her hope that the academy would continue to expand.

Almaraz, Martinez, and Petit were like the three wise men bearing gifts, except that they brought a Braves cap, a Braves jersey and a baseball signed by Bobby Cox! The group posed for pictures, laughed and talked on the steps of the hotel.

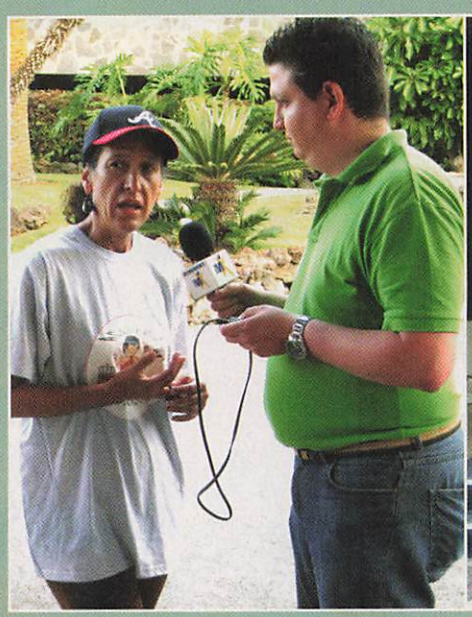
There's great enthusiasm for the academy among the locals and from Almaraz's boss, Frank Wren.

"Frank's been great," said Almaraz. "He wants us to be very aggressive internationally and to pursue every avenue to uncover prospects. There really aren't any parameters when it comes to signing prospects. He wants us to go out, be aggressive, and find and sign the best players wherever they are."

According to Almaraz, the Braves' number-one priority for the academy is to provide a place for prospects scouted by Nestor Perez to be exposed to a higher level of baseball. "If we can find them and get them here, we can impact them as far as their development is concerned," he said. "Then we can get them to the point where they need to be for us to sign."

That the academy has already produced two such prospects is heartening, and after his July visit to Tenerife, Almaraz was even more encouraged.

"Some of the players, whom I know from the past sessions we've had here, have progressed already," he said. "Some of them are getting close to being able to sign in the next year or within months. The coaches have done a good job. They've gotten these kids better, compared to where they were six months ago, or a year ago when I first came here. We see a very bright future in Tenerife."



Milagros Luis Brito (L), head of Sports, Education and Culture for the Canary Islands, discusses the positive impact of the Braves Academy with radio reporter Wilson Moreno,and (photo at right), Brito (back row center) poses with players and (back row, L-R) Stan Luketich and Jim Jones of the MLB Envoy progam, Nestor Perez Sr., Rolando Petit, Johnny Almaraz, Alejandro Sanchez, Jose Martinez and four players.

THE SPANIARD

TEEN SHORTSTOP ALEJANDRO SANCHEZ FIRST FROM HIS COUNTRY TO SIGN

BY PATTY RASMUSSEN

ALEJANDRO SANCHEZ will always remember July 21. That evening, he signed a professional baseball contract, something accomplished by very few Europeans. In a meeting room at the Hotel Maritime in Tenerife, Spain, the 17-year-old Sanchez became the first Spanish-born baseball player to sign with the Braves.

Sanchez is the second prospect to emerge from the talent pool at the Braves' European Baseball Academy. Ruben Rijkhof, a Dutch player who played several years in Spain, was the first European prospect to sign after the academy opened in February.

A lanky, 5-foot-11 shortstop with a shy smile, Sanchez is a native of Valencia, a city on the eastern coast of mainland Spain. He was first spotted by Braves scout Nestor Perez Sr. five years ago when Perez was coaching a team from Tenerife and Sanchez was playing in the youth league in Valencia.

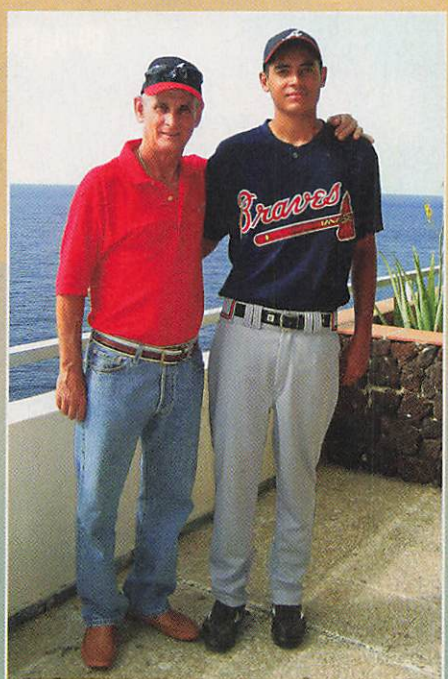
"The very first time I saw him, he was 12 years old," said Perez through an interpreter. "I saw him then, but he really caught my eye (playing for the Spanish national junior team) in the 2007 junior championships in Holland. He was 15 years old and the youngest player on the team. Everyone else was 18 years old."

Though Sanchez didn't start the first game of the championships, he impressed everyone, including Perez, who saw him play in the second game. The scout kept his eye on him for the next two years and, in February, Sanchez was invited to participate in the inaugural baseball academy on Tenerife. He continued to stand out from his peers.

"I like him because he has tools," said Perez. "He's a good prospect - level headed and smart."

Sanchez began playing baseball at a young age and comes by his love of the sport honestly. His mother, Francisca "Paqui" Martinez, once played for the Spanish national women's softball team and is the current president of the Federation of Baseball and Softball of Valencia.

Paqui Martinez arrived in Tenerife the day before the signing and watched the team work out. As signing day arrived and the hour grew nearer, she said she felt more nervous than excited. She and her son met with Johnny Almaraz, the Braves' director of international scouting and operations, prior to the signing to ask last-minute questions as Perez readied the paperwork.



Academy founder Nestor Perez (top photo) greets 17-year-old shortstop Alejandro Sanchez, the first signee from Spain, and in bottom photo, Sanchez and his mother, Francisca "Paqui" Martinez, pose with (L-R) Nestico Perez, Jose Martinez, Johnny Almaraz, Rolando Petit and Nestor Perez.

Finally, coaches with the Braves Baseball Academy along with other visiting Braves personnel, Jose Martinez (special assistant to the GM and assistant director of international scouting/operations), and Rolando Petit (assistant director of Latin American operations), filed into the hotel's meeting room to watch as first Paqui, and then Sanchez signed on the dotted line.

With Jose Martinez serving as an interpreter, Sanchez said he was, "very happy and had been waiting for this moment since as far back as I can remember. I want to go as far as I can in baseball."

Asked who his favorite player is, Sanchez said he admires Mets shortstop Jose Reyes. Though Sanchez understands some English, he intends to learn more before heading to the Braves' Instructional League in Orlando, Florida, this November. Earning his "bachiller," or high school diploma, is a high priority for Sanchez and his mother.

"Alejandro will finish high school," said Almaraz. "Schooling won't interfere with the Instructional League in November, and he'll finish his bachiller before the start of extended spring training in 2010."

Then Sanchez's mother spoke from her heart, first thanking Perez and his son, Nestico Perez, for their help in making the signing possible. She took a moment to compose herself as she addressed the Braves' officials, asking them to take her son and make him into a ballplayer.

The next morning, as the coaches and players gathered around the pitcher's mound for their pre-workout meeting at the baseball academy, Nestico took a moment to acknowledge Sanchez's signing in front of his fellow players. And after an enthusiastic round of applause for Sanchez, it was back to work as usual for him, taking groundballs and batting practice.

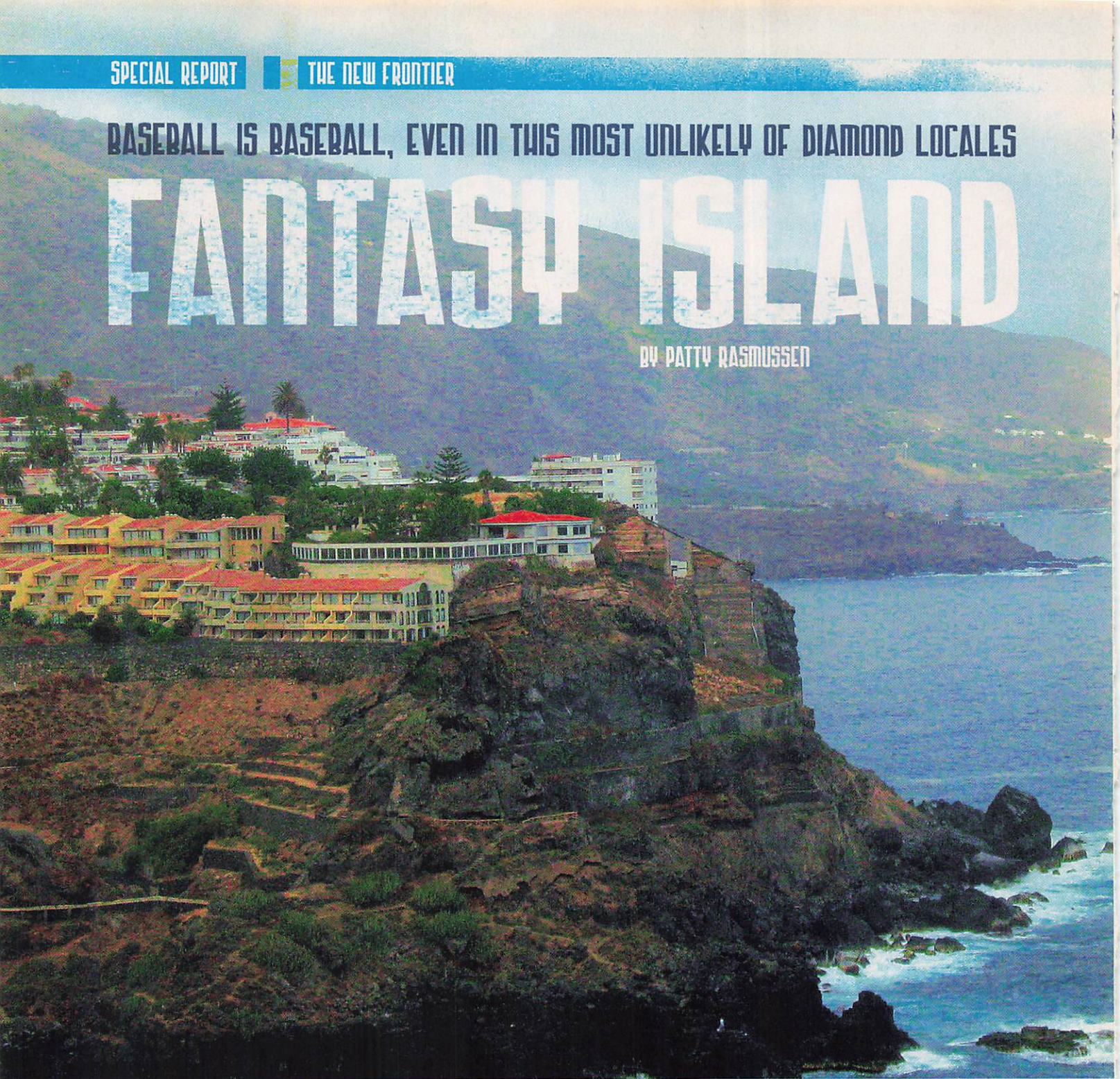
Almaraz isn't making any predictions about the future for Sanchez, who has several years of development ahead of him, but he is both optimistic and happy to see the new baseball academy bear fruit so quickly.

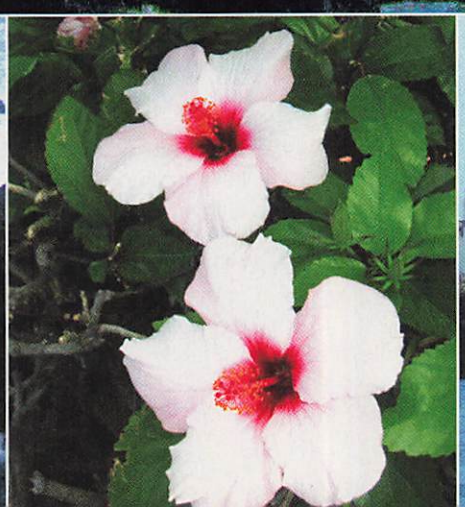
"He's young, but he's a very good prospect," said Almaraz. "And he has the potential to be a pretty good player down the road."

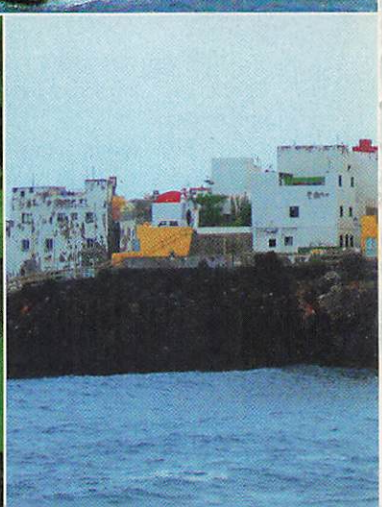
BASEBALL IS BASEBALL, EVEN IN THIS MOST UNLIKELY OF DIAMOND LOCALES

FANTASY ISLAND

BY PATTY RASMUSSEN







A POPULAR BUMPER STICKER READS, "A bad day fishing is better than a good day at the office." I'd edit that to read, "A bad day working in Tenerife is better than a good day working anywhere else!"

When ChopTalk editor/publisher Gary Caruso offered the opportunity to report and write a story about the Braves' new player development academy on Tenerife in the Canary Islands, naturally I jumped at the chance. I enjoy going new places, meeting new people, and experiencing different cultures.

Friends and family members had visited Tenerife and spoke highly of the experience. I was eager to go, and it didn't disappoint.

A little background is probably in order. Tenerife is a native word meaning "white mountain" which refers to Pico del Tiede, a 12,195-foot active volcano, the highest point in Spain, part of a national park and the dividing line of the two separate climate zones - the lush, green northern area and the dry, rocky southern portion of the island.

The island is 908 square miles, and is the largest of the seven Canary Islands. There are about 700,000 inhabitants, but that number swells with part-time residents and tourists, and it's easy to understand why. The climate is mild in the coastal region, with daytime temperatures in the upper 80s and low 90s, offset by comfortable ocean breezes.

Tourism is the principal economic engine in Tenerife, and the southern portion of the island is especially favored by northern Europeans, travelers from Great Britain, and Americans.

Limited by time, I stuck to the towns in the northern area where the baseball academy is located, Punta Brava and Puerto de la Cruz, and I hit the jackpot. On one side of my hotel was the blue Atlantic Ocean and on the other side, a mountainside covered with tiny houses, zigzagging and frighteningly narrow roads, and banana plantations. The Braves' academy was a two-minute walk from the front door of the hotel.

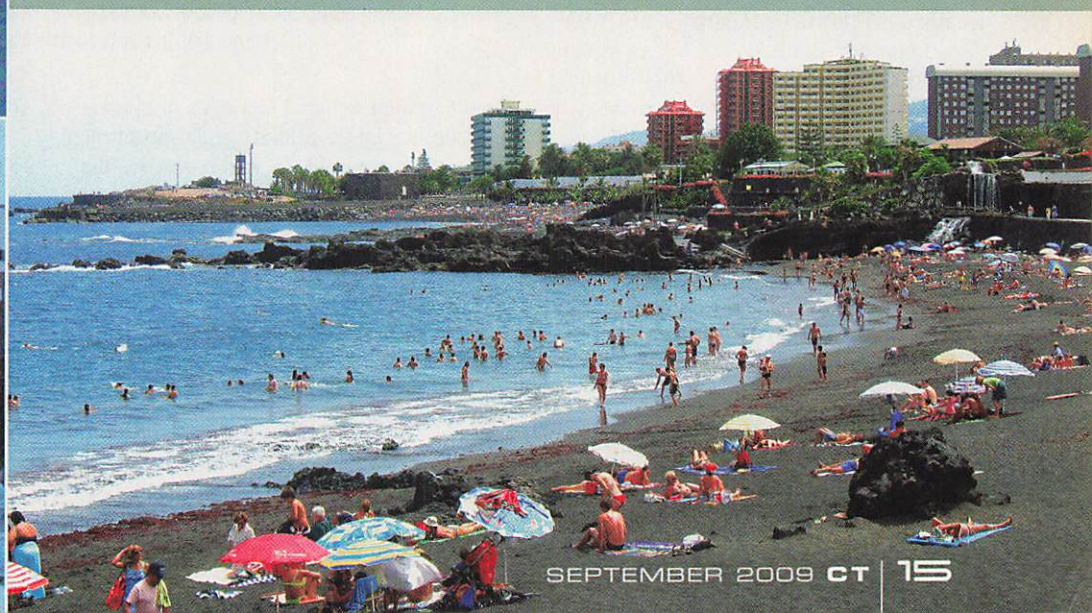
I watched two scrimmage games at the Campo de Beisbol between the academy players and the Puerto de la Cruz Marlins, and it was not unlike watching high school or college games.

Inside the lines, baseball remains the same, no matter where it is played. But sitting in the stands was a different experience. Salsa music played over the loudspeakers, with occasional announcements made in Spanish. Little children ran around, not paying attention to the game until the crack of the bat and the cheers of the crowd drew them away from their games. For 1.50 euro, you could get an empanada, cheese or meat-filled, and a Pepsi at the concession stand.

There were approximately 50 to 70 spectators, some sitting on the bleachers, others milling around the concession stand or sitting at tables behind the fence. Many more people turn out for Marlins regular season games.

Less than half a mile from the baseball stadium is one of Tenerife's top tourist

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



Tropical flowers abound and houses hang over the rocky coastline as the Atlantic's surf pounds the island (L), while tourists and locals enjoy a sunny day at Playa Jardin (below), one of the popular black sand beaches in Puerto de la Cruz.

attractions, Loro Parque, a combination zoo, botanical garden, and aquatic park featuring shows of performing seals and dolphins. Tens of thousands of tourists visit Loro Parque each year.

Though there are tourist hotels in Puerto de la Cruz, the town doesn't feel overrun with tourists. Occasional souvenir shops are more than out-numbered by quaint cafes and restaurants set on centuries old plazas, small neighborhood grocery stores, and other ordinary places of business. Beaches, popular with sunbathers and swimmers, on the northern side of the island are black sand - volcanic rock, pulverized by the constant pounding Atlantic Ocean.

Likewise, the coastline is rocky, and brightly painted homes built along the coast appear to perch perilously above the blue sea. Many homes feature small balconies with flowering window boxes decorating the façade. Laundry is hung out to dry on the flat rooftops.

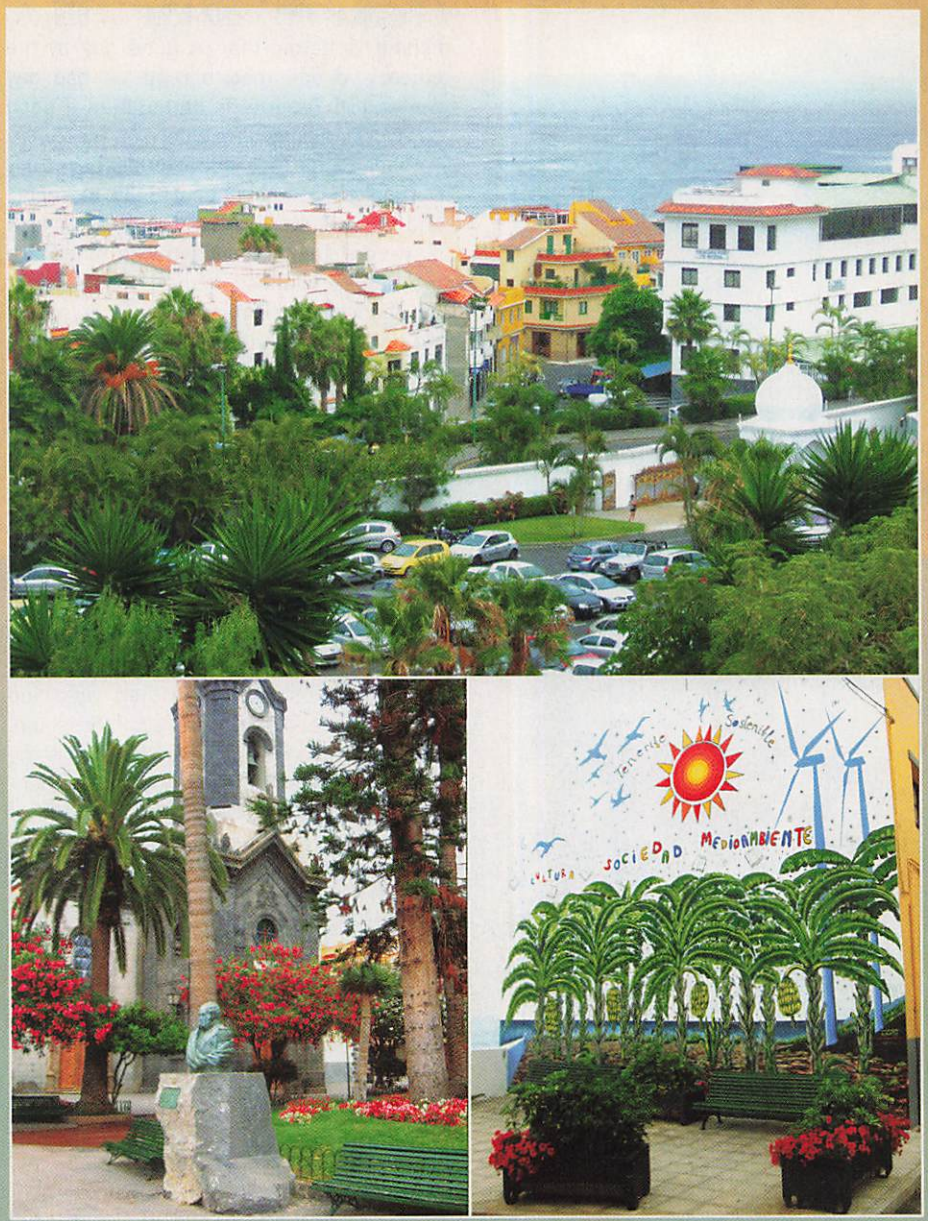
Cobblestone streets give the town a European flavor, and often open onto plazas with a church or park at the center. One popular site for sitting, sipping and people watching, either day or night, is the Plaza del Charco de los Camerones.

Several cafes surround the plaza and, as is the custom, dinner is often not even considered until after 9 p.m. The night I was there, the café tables were filled with groups, young and old, laughing and talking and listening to live music - mostly American standards. At one point the performers sang the 1950s pop music hit "Volare," and many of the people listening joined in on the chorus. The evening didn't wind down until well after 11 p.m., and that was on a Tuesday!

Naturally, the local cuisine is driven by what is readily available, in this case seafood. Puerto Pesquero is the town's fishing harbor. Boats go out to sea at night and in the wee hours of the morning, returning at sunrise to line the seaside with tables filled with the catch of the day.

Ordering pescado (fish) at lunchtime is a wise choice. Another food staple on Tenerife is potatoes, and a favorite method of cooking them is to boil them in brine, or highly salted water. The papas arrugadas (wrinkly potatoes) are served with mojo, a flavorful sauce that takes its taste and color, either green or orangey-red, from the spices used to make it.

Spanish is spoken on Tenerife, but because of the high concentration of tourists on the island, many locals can speak some English. I found it a great exercise in social relations, and sometimes hilarity, to attempt to resurrect my high school Spanish! The people couldn't have been more accommodating and friendly, genuinely pleased to show off their customs and culture.



Loro Parque (top photo), one of Tenerife's top tourist sites, sits in the foreground with the town of Punta Brava and the Atlantic Ocean beyond. (Below, left) The 17th century Iglesia de Nuestra Senora de la Pena de Francia, and (right) a colorful mural painted on a wall, reads (translated): Tenerife Sustainable, Knowlege, Society, Environment.

Reto and Beatriz Piva, whose son Diego is a player at the baseball academy, offered to take a group to lunch at one of their favorite places. Putting myself in their hands, lunch consisted of bread, goat cheese, garbanzo beans, potatoes and fried rabbit, which, I was assured, tasted like chicken! It was delicious!

Beatriz informed us that it was bad luck to have coffee where you ate your meal, so we decamped to the café across the street to sip café con leche (coffee with milk). After raving about the meal, Beatriz sent me home with packages of Canarian seasonings to try in my own kitchen, though it's doubtful I'll cook rabbit!

COMING IN OCTOBER: The New Frontier, Pt. II

TO SEE ADDITIONAL PHOTOS FROM TENERIFE, VISIT THE CHOPTALK READERS PAGE AT FACEBOOK.COM.

PAINTING THE CORNERS

BY JAY BUSBEE

IS BONUS BASEBALL IN THE CARDS?

ATLANTA BRAVES

Yunel Escobar and the Braves have to be at their best from Sept. 15 on, when they play their last 19 games against NL East foes.

THE BRAVES are playing ping-pong with my emotions these days. One minute they're throwing handfuls of runs up on the scoreboard, and the next, they're gift-wrapping wins for the other team.

Playoffs? Yes! No, wait, no…

As I write this, Atlanta is still very much in the hunt for an October berth. The beauty of the wild card is that it's winnable by any of half a dozen teams at any time.

Remember Colorado in 2007? They were six games out of the wild card on Sept. 1, and then went on an unexpected but not completely unbelievable 20-8 tear that put them in the World Series.

So, it's not out of the question for the Braves to make a late charge. But certain elements have to fall into place for Atlanta. In their own dugout, the team has to have the guys after McCann and Chipper swinging something more than balsa wood bats, and the bullpen has to handle leads with more care than a kid grabbing a greased watermelon at a Fourth of July party.

Still, it's too far out to predict how individual players will do. That can change over the course of a single afternoon or evening. So, let's take an advance look at the final days of the season. The days of Atlanta locking up the division before Labor Day are long gone. Thus, we need to think micro here, going series by series, game by game.

Here's the good news: The schedule would seem to favor the Braves' chances. Looking at the final three weeks of the season, the Braves have multiple home dates remaining. And quite a few of those games are against teams that the Braves either have to beat or should beat.

Starting from mid-September, Atlanta plays entirely within its own division. Since it's going to be tough, at least at this writing, for the Braves to catch the division-leading Phillies, this isn't the most favorable of situations. It would be preferable to face the teams ahead of them in the standings. But they have to play the schedule they're dealt, and that schedule breaks out in this fashion:

Mets (Turner Field Sept. 15-17, away Sept. 21-23). Ah, the Mets. I love seeing the Mets lose in soul-crushing fashion. But I have to admit, the last few years have made even me feel sorry for Mets fans who've had to endure two last-second collapses followed by a 2009 that's been long, slow, injury-ridden torture. That's a fate nobody really deserves.

So, by late September, let's hope that the Mets are just ready to clock out and hit the golf course. A team of bored, clock-punching vets and callow September callups ought to be easy pickings. Despite all New York's woes, however, the Braves have posted only a 5-4 record against the Mets through mid-August.

Philadelphia (Turner Field Sept. 18-20): Here's one of the strangest stats of the 2009 season: Through the first four-plus months, Atlanta is 7-2 against the defending World Champions. Part of that is surely because Philadelphia stumbled for the first half of the season before finding its footing and reeling off wins by the bucketful. But a win is a win. Good signs: Atlanta faces Philly at home, far from those borderline-unhinged Philly fans, and this is only a three-game set and a good way to make up three quick games in the standings.

Florida (Turner Field Sept. 28-30): This series will almost certainly be the most critical of the late season, since the Fish have been jockeying with the boys from the A-T-L all season for second place and a wild-card edge. For now, Florida has the edge, having taken 5 of 8 from the Braves through mid-August. Sweep this series, and Atlanta could potentially eliminate the Marlins as competition. Lose two or more, and the hill to climb turns into a cliff.

Washington (away Sept. 25-27, Turner Field Oct. 1-4): Here's the polar opposite of the Phillies stat: Through mid-August, Atlanta is only 5-4 against the Nationals. If asked before checking, I wouldn't have expected the Nats to have won four games all season. This is a perfect case of playing down to your competition.

The Braves need to take advantage of seven games against one of the worst teams in the majors and stack some wins high. Particularly since Atlanta is likely going to be challenging several West Coast teams for the wild card spot, it's critical that the Braves post Ws on the scoreboard for their competitors to stare at in their late-evening games.

So, there you have it. The table is set. I feel as good about the top-to-bottom talent of this team as I have in the last three years, but they still have to close the deal. We can't ask for anything more than the opportunity to play in the post-season, and the Braves have it.

SERIOUS COMPANY

NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME

ESPN PICKING up the Braves' Aug. 2 game with the Dodgers at Turner Field for their Sunday night telecast wasn't particularly popular with the players. It turned a 1:35 p.m. game into an 8 p.m. game and meant the team spent much of the night in a plane on the way to play at San Diego the next evening.

However, ESPN did offer an interesting nugget of information during the broadcast that would seem to further enhance the Hall of Fame qualifications that Chipper Jones is compiling.

ESPN pointed out that Chipper and Babe Ruth (R) are the only two players in history to be on at least 10 first-place teams, hit 400 or more career home runs, and compile a lifetime batting average over .300.

IN THE GENES

SPECIAL

Cam Bedrosian, son of former Braves pitcher Steve Bedrosian, is one of the best high school pitchers - and one of the top pro prospects - in the nation.

THERE ARE PLENTY of examples in history about the value of genetics to a baseball career, whether it is brothers from the same family (Phil and Joe Niekro; Joe, Vince and Dom DiMaggio) or father and son (Ken Griffey and Ken Griffey Jr.) or both (Felipe, Matty and Jesus Alou and Moises Alou).

That trend may continue with the legacies of a couple of former Braves pitchers - one recent and one from decades ago.

Cam Bedrosian, one of the top high school pitching prospects in the nation, is the son of Steve Bedrosian, who had two stints with the Braves (1981-85, '93-95) and won the 1987 Cy Young Award with Philadelphia. Nolan Fontana (Oct. '07 and Oct. '08 CT) is the grandson of Lou Burdette, the late Braves Hall of Famer and MVP of the 1957 World Series victory over the Yankees.

At 6-foot-1, 195 pounds and already blessed with a fastball in the low to mid 90s, Bedrosian is entering his senior season at East Coweta High in Sharpsburg, Ga., and figures to come off the board early in the 2010 draft next June. He was 10-1 and posted a 1.10 earned run average as a junior, striking out 96 and walking only 17 in 57 1/3 innings.

"Cam works harder in the off-season and during the season than any other pitcher that I have coached in 13 years," said Franklin DeLoach, coach at East Coweta, where Steve Bedrosian serves as pitching coach. "He never takes a day off from working hard and smart. He's always studying the game, which he gets from his dad."

Already projected as a first-round pick, Bedrosian throws three other pitches – a curveball, slider and changeup – in addition to his fastball. He was to play in the Aflac All-American High School Baseball Classic on Aug. 16 in San Diego. Only 40 players nationally are invited.

Fontana, a shortstop and closer, is a year ahead of Bedrosian and similarly driven. After graduating with honors from West Orange High in Winter Garden, Fla., this past spring, he decided to pass on pro ball for the time being and almost immediately enrolled for the summer session at the University of Florida, one of the nation's top college programs where he has a scholarship.

According to his father, Paul Fontana, the Braves expressed interest in selecting Nolan on the second day of the June draft (begins with the fourth round), but he'd already informed individual teams that showed interest, as well as the Major League Baseball Scouting Bureau, that it would take first- or second-round bonus money to sign him.

Among many other accomplishments, Nolan hit a two-out, walk-off homer to win the district title for his team, which finished 28-2 and was ranked as high as No. 2 in national polls. He reached base safely in 17 consecutive at-bats at one point, and finished his senior season with a .508 batting average and a 1.31 ERA in 16 innings as a closer.

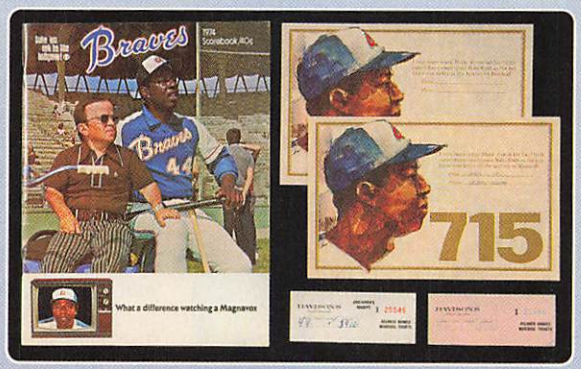
Memories

THE RAREST OF TICKETS

WHEN HANK AARON hit his 715th home run on April 8, 1974, there were 53,775 fans packed into what then was called simply Atlanta Stadium. But one ticket holder never made it there, and the unused ticket (below) has become a rare piece of memorabilia. A lot featuring this and other items from that historic game sold for $2,500 at a live auction during the Major League Baseball All-Star FanFest in St. Louis.

David Hunt of Hunt Auctions, who ran the auction, said the piece did even better than he hoped.

"For a modern era ticket, that's an extraordinary amount of money," said Hunt. "Typically, when you get to that sort of money, you have to get something like a 1920s World Series ticket or something of that sort."



The ticket was originally purchased in a group of two. It carried a face value of just $3 for an upper level seat. Since the game took place long before electronic scanners, tickets were torn when fans entered the stadium. So a ticket in its original condition is extremely rare for such a celebrated event.

The same lot also included (top) the original game program, a pair of Hank Aaron 715 home run souvenir certificates that the game attendees received, as well as both the ticket receipt and envelope from Davison's department store.

That game was the Braves' 1974 home opener and came four days after Aaron tied Babe Ruth with homer number 714 in Cincinnati. In the fourth inning, he connected for his record-breaking blast off Dodgers lefthander Al Downing.

"The fact that it was full and unused, that's the rarity of it, because obviously it was an anticipated event," said Hunt. "People knew that he was going to hit it at some point in the near future. To have a piece like that survive all these years untouched in mint condition, uncirculated and unused is very rare, and the price reflected that."

The July auction saw other Braves items (Aug. '09 CT) sell for top prices. A 1954 Warren Spahn road jersey, worn when the Hall of Fame lefty pitched for the Milwaukee Braves, sold for $30,000. That fell at the top of the auction's $20,000-$30,000 price guideline for this game worn gray jersey.

Another unique item, an honorary Gold Glove Award given to Milwaukee Braves first baseman Frank Torre by Rawlings Sporting Goods, went for $1,700. That surpassed the guideline of $1,000-$1,500. A replica of Braves manager Fred Haney's 1957 World Series ring was purchased for $2,200. That item's expected price had ranged from $2,000 to $3,000.

Hunt said the Braves collectibles fared well at the auction, despite the tough economic times.

"I think that shows the popularity of those players, and how they've become iconic over the years," he said.

- STEVE FALL

LEGENDS

MILO STEWART JR./NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM

DURING HALL OF FAME festivities in Cooperstown July 26, Hank Aaron, shown here at the induction ceremony with preeminent Dodgers lefthander Sandy Koufax, said he believes players linked to performance-enhancing drugs should be inducted into the Hall only if their plaques include an asterisk. He also said he believes all-time hit king Pete Rose should be allowed in the Hall. Aaron made another appearance to speak to players at the 17th annual Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities (RBI) World Series in Jupiter, Fla., Aug. 4.

LOOKS FAMILIAR

ATLANTA BRAVES

In his first 35 at-bats after being reacquired by the Braves, Adam LaRoche hit .371 with 3 home runs, including a pair Aug. 12 in a 6-2 win over Washington.

THE BRAVES made an on-the-run exchange of first basemen at the July 31 trading deadline when they sent **Casey Kotchman** to the Red Sox in a one-for-one deal for **Adam LaRoche** and cash considerations. LaRoche, a Brave from 2004-06, played just six games with Boston after the Red Sox acquired him from Pittsburgh July 22.

The Braves traded LaRoche to Pittsburgh to acquire **Mike Gonzalez**. In his final year with Atlanta, he had a career season, hitting .285 with 32 home runs and 90 RBIs. A career .269 hitter with 124 home runs at the time of the trade, LaRoche is a notorious second-half player and hits more home runs than Kotchman. The Braves are hoping to capitalize on both factors to give their lineup a boost down the stretch.

The Braves acquired Kotchman from the Angels, along with minor league righthander **Steve Marek** in exchange for **Mark Teixeira** at last year's trading deadline.

ON THE MOVE

Tommy Hanson was recalled from Gwinnett July 20 to make his regular start. He was optioned to Gwinnett for 10 days, including the All-Star break, just so Atlanta could add another reliever to shore up the bullpen. **Luis Valdez** spent that 10-day period with Atlanta and then was optioned back to Gwinnett.

Kelly Johnson was activated July 23 after a stint on the disabled list and some rehab work at Gwinnett. **Brooks Conrad** was optioned to Gwinnett to open a spot for Johnson on the roster.

When **Casey Kotchman** was traded to Boston for **Adam LaRoche** July 31, **Barbaro Canizares** was recalled from Gwinnett to take Kotchman's spot for a day until LaRoche could report. Canizares was sent back to Gwinnett Aug. 1.

Buddy Carlyle was optioned to Gwinnett Aug. 7 so he could get some work in his effort to recover from being diagnosed with diabetes. And on Aug. 11, **Omar Infante** (broken hand) was activated, and **Diory Hernandez** was optioned to Gwinnett.

WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?

Kelly Johnson hadn't been in an Atlanta game since July 2 until July 23. He apparently became a changed man in those three weeks when he recovered from his first half slump and tendinitis in his wrist during a rehab stint at Gwinnett. After making pinch-hit performances July 23-24, Johnson started at second base July 26 and responded with a home run, two doubles and two RBIs in a 10-2 win at Milwaukee. He was in the lineup because **Chipper Jones** had the day off, enabling Bobby Cox to move **Martin Prado** to third base. Johnson was hitting just .226 entering the game.

GOOD WITH THE BAD

Adam LaRoche and **Matt Diaz** had an unusual combination of achievements in the 9-2 win at San Diego Aug. 4. LaRoche tied a career high with four hits - all singles - and walked in the ninth. Diaz, who was hitting right behind LaRoche, hit into a career-high three doubleplays... but also hit a home run in the sixth inning. Diaz became the only Brave since the team moved to Atlanta in 1966 to have a home run and hit into three doubleplays in the same game (tying a franchise record). The last major leaguer to do it was **Scott Rolen** in 2002.

HANDOFF

The Braves released **Jeff Bennett** July 30 at the reliever's request, and he signed with Tampa Bay Aug. 1. Bennett broke a bone in his left (non-pitching) hand June 24 when he punched a wall near the dugout between innings of a loss against the Yankees. He was placed on the disabled list and had surgery a few days later. The Braves suspended his pay, causing Bennett to file a grievance with the Players Association who ordered the Braves to give him back pay or grant him free agency.

THREE CHEERS!

Yunel Escobar was named National League Player of the Week for the shortened period after the All-Star break (July 16-19). He lit up the Mets in a four-game series at Turner Field by going 7-for-14 with three doubles, two home runs and a slugging percentage of 1.143. It's the first time he won the award.

APPLES TO ORANGES

Bobby Cox was ranked No. 46 on a list of sports' 50 greatest coaches of all-time compiled by the Sporting News and select-

ed by a panel of 118 Hall of Famers, championship coaches and other experts. Only two current managers ranked higher than Cox on the list - the Dodgers' **Joe Torre** (No. 32) and Cardinals' **Tony La Russa** (No. 41). Both played for the Braves (Torre in 1960-68 and La Russa in 1971), and Torre also managed the Braves (1982-84).

Legendary UCLA basketball coach **John Wooden** was a runaway No. 1 choice in the comparison of coaches and managers in all sports. Baseball representatives among the voters included **Whitey Herzog** and **Tom Lasorda**.

SHORT HOPS

- When **Adam LaRoche** hit a home run at San Diego Aug. 3, it was his first this year with the Braves - the third team he homered for this season (Pirates and Red Sox). He's just the fourth player in the last 10 years (**Cliff Floyd** in '02, **Matt Lawton** in '05 and **Phil Nevin** '06) to hit home runs for three teams in two leagues in the same season.

- **Ryan Braun**'s home run in the fifth inning July 24 off **Javier Vazquez** in Milwaukee was the first allowed by the Atlanta pitching staff in 77 2/3 innings. However, the Braves still won, 9-4.

- **Tommy Hanson** struck out 11 Giants July 20, a first for an Atlanta rookie, and raised his record to 5-0 in an 11-3 victory.

- **Mike Gonzalez** had to leave the July 23 loss to the Giants in the eighth inning after being struck in the left arm by a line drive off the bat of **Nate Schierholtz**.

- **Nate McLouth** missed three starts Aug. 9, 11-12 due a strained right hamstring he originally injured in late June.

- **Chipper Jones** missed the final three games at Dodger Stadium Aug. 7-9 due to a strained left oblique muscle, but the Braves own all three.

- The Braves and Brewers wore throwback uniforms July 25 in Milwaukee as a tribute to the Negro Leagues. The Braves wore Atlanta Black Crackers uniforms, and the Brewers wore Milwaukee Bears uniforms.

FRANK WREN
GENERAL MANAGER

THE WAY WE'RE PLAYING HAS BECOME INFECTIOUS

I THINK WE'RE POSITIONED very well, at this writing, for the last six to seven weeks of the season. I think we have a lineup with a group of players that, for lack of a better term, are "baseball players." They may not be superstars, but they are really good baseball players, and we have more of them now, up and down the lineup and on the bench.

By "good baseball players", I mean players who give you good at-bats, good effort and play the game well defensively. To me, it's infectious the way they are playing.

I think the pitching is at a real high level, and now with the rest of the team performing the way they are, the starters are getting rewarded for their good pitching.

We traded Casey Kotchman to Boston in exchange for Adam LaRoche, one first baseman for another. As we've been looking at our club since spring training, we've talked at length about not having a prototypical power bat in lineup. We felt that a bat like LaRoche's might mean 8 to 10 more home runs than Casey, and 8 to 10 more home runs could mean the difference in 4 to 5 games over two months. We felt that was worth pursuing.

Defensively, there's no dropoff. And we know Adam's makeup, that he's a good fit on the team, and his ability to drive the ball out of the park was intriguing.

I don't think there's any doubt that the "Gotta Grind It" t-shirts the players had made for the second half are significant in that they serve as a subtle reminder of what each of these guys believes. That's what it's all about. It's a subtle reminder that, "If we keep grinding, we can do this." I love it when players take the initiative and creativity to make sure everyone understands what's important.

> "WE FELT THAT A BAT LIKE LAROCHE'S MIGHT MEAN 8 TO 10 MORE HOME RUNS..."

Kelly Johnson went to Gwinnett with a great attitude and a goal of what he wanted to work on, and it was a very successful couple of weeks. He got his swing re-engineered to what it looked like when he was coming through the minors and we thought he had one of the prettiest swings in baseball. We're happy for him and happy for us that he was able to make the adjustments.

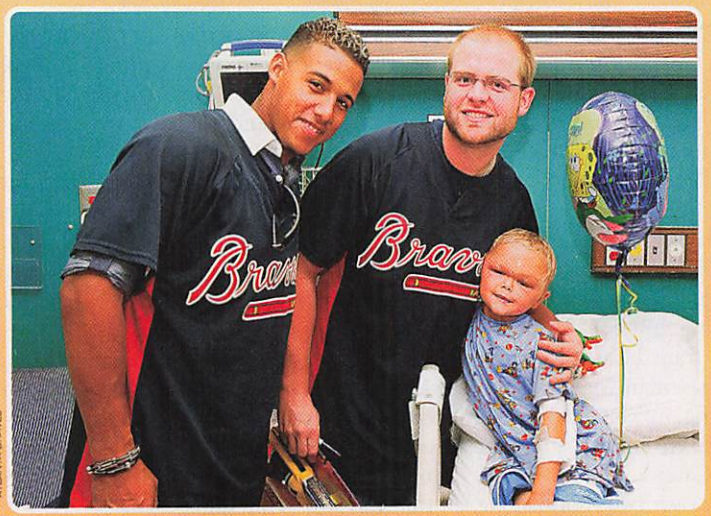
Tim Hudson is doing well. He had a little setback with a high hamstring problem, but he's much better. We're going to back off his pitches a little in rehab to make sure he doesn't fatigue. It'll probably delay his return another week or so, but he's doing well and could be back by Sept. 1.

The game-ending play Yunel Escobar made at Los Angeles (Aug. 8) is one of those plays I'm not sure another shortstop in the league can make - diving to make the play, getting to his feet, and throwing out a speedy Matt Kemp. You want to get on a roll, and everything was pointing toward a win, but at the same time, it took that extraordinary effort and clearly one of the best plays of the year to end the game (2-1 win in 10 innings).

I'm not sure an infielder can make a much better game-ending play than that. Honestly, I don't think anyone thought there'd be an out recorded, but that it was just a play to keep the winning run from scoring (Andre Either was on second).

One of the products of winning and winning tight games is that your setup men and closer have to do a lot of pitching in a short amount of time. That's what happened to us on the West Coast, particularly with Rafael Soriano, but fortunately we had an off day when we got home, and I expect he'll be refreshed after having some time off.

A CHRISTMAS STORY



Yunel Escobar and Brian McCann meet a patient named Sammy at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta during their Christmas in July visit.

THE BRAVES brought "Christmas in July" to Children's Healthcare of Atlanta campuses on July 22. Atlanta Braves including: **Brian McCann** and his wife **Ashley**, **Tommy Hanson**, **Yunel Escobar**, **Kris Medlen**, **Brooks Conrad**, **Buddy Carlyle** and his wife **Jessica**, **Jeff Bennett** and his wife **Rachel**, coach **Brian Snitker** and his wife **Veronica**, and broadcasters **Don Sutton** and **Chip Caray** visited patients at area Children's Healthcare of Atlanta campuses.

Zhu Zhu Pets teamed with the Braves to visit patients and distribute Zhu Zhu Pets toys and hundreds of other toys collected by the Braves' Wives during a toy drive earlier this season. Zhu Zhu Pets are popular, realistic, plush, and interactive hamster "smart pets" that talk and move around in their own playsets. Patients at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta are among the first children to have their own Zhu Zhu Pets, since the toys launched nationwide and became available in major retailers in mid-August.

DOG DAY

The Braves are inviting fans to bring their "best friends" to the game on Sunday, Sept. 6, for the season's final "Bark in the Park." Fans must pre-register at braves.com/bark by Sept. 3. Tickets are $25 and include one "human ticket," one "dog ticket" and a donation to benefit non-profit organizations that help animals in need. Additional "human tickets" are available for $12. Tickets will not be available on the day of the event, and fans should register soon, since space is limited.

WAG-A-LOT, Atlanta's first doggie-day-care center, will be on hand to help ensure all animals enjoy their time at Turner Field. Braves Coca-Cola Sky Field will be transformed into a doggie-paradise, complete with on-site veterinary services, doggie pools, cool water misters, and plenty of watering holes for the pets to stay hydrated.

More than 7,000 Braves fans and 3,500 dogs have attended "Bark in the Park" days at Turner Field since the first Bark event in 2006.

FIRST IN THE NL!

According to the Harris Poll, the Braves are the most popular team in the National League and the third most popular team in Major League Baseball, trailing only the Yankees and Red Sox. The Cubs and Dodgers are tied for fourth/fifth. The Braves were second behind the Yankees in the same poll a year ago. The Harris Poll is a nationwide online survey of 2,177 U.S. adults conducted between June 8 and 15. The Braves also ranked third in the results of a similar poll conducted by ESPN this past winter (May '09 CT).

RADIO WAVES

Dickey Broadcasting Company will become the new Braves' radio rightsholder beginning in 2010. The five-year agreement includes all 162 games per season which will air on two Atlanta flagship radio stations - Dickey Broadcasting Company's 680 the Fan (WCNN-AM) and Cumulus' Rock 100.5 (WNNX-FM). Dickey Broadcasting Company will also manage the Braves radio network to include at least 150 stations throughout the Southeast.

Don Sutton and **Jim Powell** will call the action on the largest radio network in sports. All game-day programming will include a pre- and post-game show, a coaches show, programming on 680 the Fan's morning show "The Rude Awakening", and additional programming elements to be determined. They will also air a yet undetermined amount of spring training games.

ALWAYS CONNECTED

MLB.TV and MLB.TV Premium subscribers now have live access to every out-of-market Major League Baseball game through the award-winning At Bat 2009 application on the iPhone and iPod touch, as well as on their computers. Effective immediately, every live game is available through MLB.com At Bat 2009, exclusively to those subscribers with MLB.TV accounts.

For those who do not subscribe to MLB.TV, MLB.com will continue to make two games per day available for all At Bat 2009 subscribers, subject to blackout restrictions.

MLB.TV and MLB.TV Premium subscribers can access every out-of-market game in high quality video over either a Wi-Fi connection or the carrier network as part of At Bat 2009. Leveraging standards-based https streaming technology enabled by the iPhone OS 3.0 update, the MLB.com app includes controls to give users the ability to pause a game or rewind the action.

Additionally, adaptive bitrate technology is constantly working automatically to give users the highest quality viceo stream their network connection can support.

The application also offers live audio broadcasts without blackout restrictions, a continuously updated scoreboard, MLB.com Gameday functionality, real-time video highlights and Condensed Games, a short-form video recap of every payoff pitch from every game.

CARS R US

The Braves and AutoTrader Classics were scheduled to host classic car owners at the Aug. 23 game for the first annual "Octane in the Outfield," an event for car enthusiasts throughout the region. A pre-game car show featuring participating fans' automobiles was to take place in the morning, and then winners could showcase their automobiles in a drive around the field before the first pitch.

BAG BOYS

Kenshin Kawakami, **Kris Medlen** and **Boone Logan** greeted fans and assisted customers at Publix in Johns Creek (5805 State Bridge Rd.) July 31 as part of the ongoing Shop With the Braves program. The pitchers bagged groceries, assisted in the deli, and signed autographs. Fans could donate school supplies to the Atlanta Community Food Bank's Kids In Need program and receive autographs in return. Every year, Kids In Need distributes nearly 200,000 pounds of brand new school supplies to teachers in low-income schools.

BALLS & STRIKES

- **Martin Prado** signed autographs at the Clubhouse Store at CNN Center Aug. 15.
- **Charlie Leibrandt** (LHP, 1990-92) and **Greg McMichael** (RHP, 1993-96, 2000) signed autographs in Fan Plaza on Aug. 16 during All-Star Sunday, and **Marvin Freeman** (RHP, 1990-93) signed on Aug. 2.
- The Braves had their second annual Home School Day on Aug. 17, prior to the makeup game against Arizona.

BOBBY COX

MANAGER

WE'VE GOT CONFIDENCE TO MAKE A STRETCH RUN

THIS IS THE BEST time of the year, especially if you're involved in a pennant race. The strategy is, "Don't get too far ahead of yourself." You need to play every series one at a time. That sounds obvious. There's no other way to play it, but I'm talking about mentally.

When you have a team rolling into town over the weekend and it's just Tuesday, you can't say, "Okay, that's going to be the big series." You have to beat the team in front of you. Every series is a big series.

We're lucky, because our schedule has us playing the current division leaders so much in the last month of the season. That gives us a chance to make up ground, and we don't have to rely on someone else beating them.

We've had some great pennant races down the stretch here in Atlanta, but I don't need to bring up past pennant races to the players. The one they're in is exciting enough.

You want to win so badly. But that's part of not getting too far ahead of yourself. You have to play your game, play the way you played to get to that point.

The series we had with the Dodgers in Los Angeles in the first week of August helped give our club a good boost of confidence. Winning breeds confidence, and the games we won out there were some of the best of the season.

There was clutch hitting and great pitching, a couple of terrific back-to-back performances from Kawakami and Vazquez. The fans that stayed up late, especially to watch every pitch of those extra-inning games, got to see some playoff-quality games.

We were extremely happy to get Omar Infante back in August. He can do it all. Getting him back was like acquiring the best utility guy in the league, and it didn't hurt to add another right-handed bat to the lineup. Tim Hudson is coming along in his rehab. He's projected to come back by the end of August.

> "WE'RE LUCKY, BECAUSE OUR SCHEDULE HAS US PLAYING THE CURRENT DIVISION LEADERS SO MUCH IN THE LAST MONTH..."

We have a number of players who have stepped up in the past couple of months and shown us that they have what it takes to play every day. Martin Prado has played great wherever we've put him, and even Diory Hernandez did a good job of filling in when Yunel Escobar was hurt. Tommy Hanson couldn't have had better performances - he's pretty cool out there. Our bullpen has been strong, and I'm confident that they're going to get even stronger. Kris Medlen showed a lot of toughness coming in from the bullpen.

We were glad to welcome Adam LaRoche back to the Braves. He's strong defensively and in the past, Adam has been a second-half hitter. He's already made contributions offensively. His bat is a great addition to our lineup.

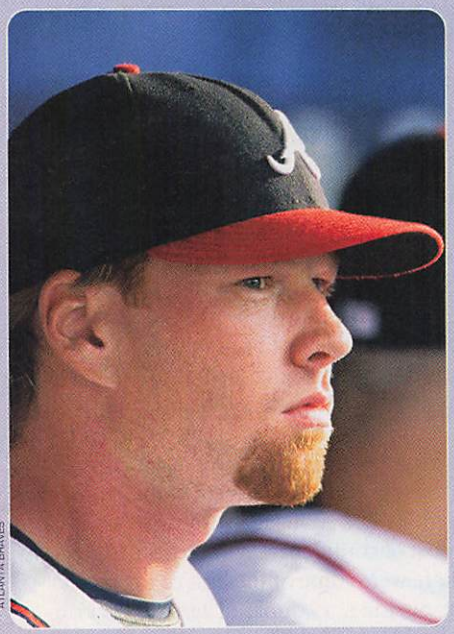
September is a great time of the season, because of callups and pennant races. There are several factors, but who you call up definitely has a lot to do with where your club is in the standings. There's no need to tinker with things that are working.

We're calling up anybody we think will help us win down the stretch. Generally speaking, we're going to call up players who can fill as many roles as possible, playing multiple positions, pinch-hitting, pinch-running. And you're going to bring in at least two pitchers to protect yourself.

I might have arguments with umpires occasionally, but I really think they are scrutinized so much by Major League Baseball. I don't think umpires are second-guessing themselves any more than the players when they're up to bat, but between QuesTec (the umpire monitoring system), supervisors watching every game, and computer boxes monitoring the pitches, it's hard on them.

PLAYING PEPPER

TOMMY HANSON



ATLANTA BRAVES

INTERVIEW BY
PATTY RASMUSSEN

Through his first 11 big league starts, Hanson was 6-2 with a 3.22 ERA, allowing just 60 hits in 67 innings.

CHOPTALK: Since everyone is always asking Kris Medlen about you, what's Kris really like?

HANSON: (Laughing) That all depends on what he said about me! Seriously, he really keeps you on your toes at all times. He's going to let you know if you've done something wrong, and he'll be the first one to tell you. He busts you constantly and doesn't let up! He's fun to have around, and he's one of my best friends. It's great to have him around, though sometimes he gets to be a bit much.

CT: What do you do then? Send him to his room?

HANSON: (Laughs) He's figured me out pretty much. When I get mad, I'm quiet. So at first, he would keep going and going until I went overboard. But now he knows when to back off.

CT: You and Kris are roommates. Is there a divvying up of the chores? Have you hired a maid?

HANSON: Well, my little sisters are in town now, so I pay them to clean up when we go on the road. Hopefully, that will be a routine. Every once in a while, his girlfriend will come into town, and he'll decide to clean up and try to act like he's tidy. But really, when the dishes get backed up or something like that, whoever feels like cleaning up takes care of it.

CT: You guys have been roommates before, right? It's just that this is a nicer place.

HANSON: Exactly. We've been roommates since 2006 when we first signed. We lived together all through the minors and now, too.

CT: Both of you lived in California and played against each other in community college, but it wasn't until you joined the Braves organization that you became friends. How did you meet?

HANSON: We signed the same year (2006). We had the same scout (Tom Battista), and he told me, "Go introduce yourself (to Kris)." I knew who he was, and it so happened that he was in the locker next to me when we got to rookie ball, so I introduced myself and talked. Being a new guy there, both of us being from Southern California, I knew who he was and he knew who I was, so it clicked from there. He keeps everything light and fun, and no matter what happens, we're going to laugh. And it was good to have a buddy here (in Atlanta) when I got here. It makes the whole transition easier. Just watching him pitch here, having him called up before me, made it a little easier for me.

CT: Is your given name Tommy or Thomas?

HANSON: It's Thomas J Hanson Jr. It's my dad's name. He's called Tom. The "J" stands for a bunch of people in my grandmother's life whose names start with "J", like my Uncle Jesse. So, it's not an initial for a specific person. It's not J-a-y. There's no period after the "J". It's just the letter "J".

CT: Will you ever graduate to being called "Tom" instead of "Tommy"?

HANSON: I don't want to, because it sounds old. All my dad's friends from high school call him "Tommy," and I don't get it. I'm like, 'You're an old guy. You're Tom.' D-Lowe (Derek Lowe) calls me Tom, and I'm not a huge fan of it. My dad's Tom. I'm Tommy.

CT: Did you ever have any other nicknames? Were you called "Red" when you were a kid?

HANSON: When I was younger, I can't believe I'm going to say this, because I hated it, but everyone (in my family) called me "Tom-Tom." They called me that when I got older, but I hated it and said, "You've got to stop calling me that."

> "I DON'T TALK A LOT, THOUGH I WILL TALK WHEN I NEED TO. I WOULDN'T SAY I'M NOT SOCIAL, BUT I JUST DON'T TALK A LOT."

CT: Or you'd do what?

HANSON: I'd keep being mad! There came a point when I started ignoring people who'd call me that, and it finally died out.

CT: What's one word that describes you as a kid?

HANSON: Quiet. Really quiet. I never said too much. When I was younger, I just did my thing and didn't talk a lot.

CT: Do you think you're still quiet? Is that how you'd describe yourself now?

HANSON: I would say I'm reserved. I don't talk a lot, though I will talk when I need to. I wouldn't say I'm not social, but I just don't talk a lot. I like to do what I have to do and stay in my little circle. I'm not into getting a lot of attention.

CT: You're in a business where you're going to get a lot of attention.

HANSON: I've already noticed that. I understand it comes with the job, but it's one of those things that "is what it is." I like to stay in my own shell, so (attention) is something I'm going to need to get used to. I know it comes with the territory, so I've just got to deal with it.

CT: Do you have any amusing minor league story to share?

HANSON: There were a couple of times when we didn't get to eat dinner. In the lower levels of the minor leagues, they don't have a spread in the clubhouse after the game. There were times when we'd eat at Applebee's seven out of seven days and a couple of times when we didn't even get to eat dinner. We got snacks out of the vending machine at the hotel, and the snacks were old and crusty. That was our dinner. That's the one thing that really stuck out with me because I remember that - sitting there with those old, crusty snacks thinking, "Really? This is what I'm doing? I've resorted to eating out of a vending machine?" It was not fun.

CT: Growing up in Southern California, which baseball team was "your" team? Did you have a particular pitcher you admired?

HANSON: When I was younger, I really just liked watching baseball, any baseball. Once I got a little older, I started following the Anaheim Angels a little bit. That was really my team through junior high and high school. I watched them because they were always on and they were winning. I didn't start pitching seriously until I was in high school. In my junior year, that's when I realized if I'm going to keep playing, it's going to be as a pitcher, and that's when I started focusing on it.

CT: When did you grow so tall (6-feet-6)?

HANSON: It was the summer before my junior year. I grew four inches in two months, which was painful. It hurt my knees, my thigh bones always hurt so badly. I was 15 years old and I was about 6-1 or 6-2, and that's when I sprouted up. I didn't know how tall I would get. My dad is 6 feet tall, and my mom (Cindy) is probably 5-5, so I had no idea how tall I'd end up. Then all of a sudden, I started having these horrible growing pains. Really, all my life I've had growing pains, but that was, by far, the worst. I was awkward. I was growing so fast. I was always athletic, but during that time, I was arms and legs all over the place. I didn't know what was going on!

CT: Do you have a minimum height requirement for women you date?

HANSON: (Laughing) I don't, I don't. It's never been an issue. It isn't something I think about.

CT: You're a West Coast guy living on the East Coast. Is there a big difference? Is the pace faster on the East Coast than on the West?

HANSON: I don't think it's that big a difference, to be honest. Being in Atlanta makes it seem pretty similar, not that big of a difference in pace from where I grew up (Redlands, Calif.). I think at home everyone is in a rush. There are cars everywhere, and everyone's in a rush. People here are a lot nicer. I mean it - it's a lot more friendly. At home, and I'm not bashing, everyone's always on the go, doing what they've got to do.

CT: What was your favorite subject in school?

HANSON: I always liked history, so if I had to pick one, it would be history. I liked U.S. history. But I was never big into school. I always wanted to be outside. Kris always makes fun of me, because I'm good with numbers. He thinks it's a big deal that I can add numbers really fast in my head.

CT: Large numbers?

HANSON: Not large numbers, but, like when we're playing a game, I can do basic math really fast, and he'll say, "Wait, how did you figure that out?" I was never big into school. I had to get good grades or my dad would have been all over me.

CT: Would he have taken away playing ball?

HANSON: No. But I wouldn't have been

ATLANTA BRAVES

A 22nd-round draft pick in 2005, Hanson won the Phil Niekro Award last year as the best pitcher in the Braves' farm system.

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

able to do anything but that. He never would have taken baseball away from me, because he knew it would crush me and I would have been furious. But anything besides that. Even now, with my sisters, you can play a sport or you can get a job, one or the other. You had to do something else, other than school. You couldn't sit around and do nothing.

CT: You didn't have to be pushed into playing baseball then?

HANSON: Never. It was always something I wanted to do. Neither one of my parents played baseball or softball. When I was young, I started playing and loved it and kept playing. Both my parents have been so supportive all the way, growing up. My dad never pushed me, always encouraged me, and sometimes, if I didn't want to go to practice or something, he'd find a way to talk me into wanting to go. My dad is a really good motivator.

CT: What has he said that's really stuck with you?

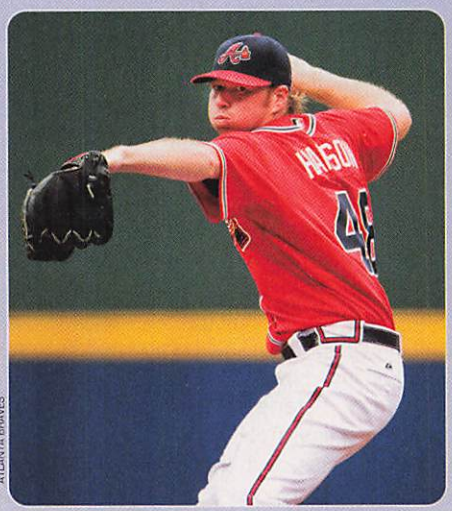
HANSON: I think it's more just watching him. He's retired now, but I watched him go to work every day and seeing what he did (iron worker). There were days when he didn't want to go and he went anyway. He didn't have to talk about it. Just seeing him do what he needed to do. There are days I don't feel like doing stuff and days I'm not feeling well, and it's always in the back of my mind that he didn't miss work, no matter what. He was on time, early, and did his job. He told me that his dad did the same thing, so he didn't have to say a word to me. I think it's in me now that I'm going to do the same thing. That's the biggest thing I've learned from my dad.

CT: You mention your family a good bit, how supportive they are. How many siblings do you have?

HANSON: I have two younger sisters (17 and 13) and one older sister (25). And I have a half-brother and a step-brother, 21, (from my mom). I have five siblings connected to me, and I'm pretty close to all of them. My two younger sisters I'm really close to. I think because I'm the older brother and do the whole "look after them" thing. It's nice having them (in Atlanta) now, because I have been so close to them. Every year when I'd leave, I'd have to see them cry. I talk to my older sister every couple of days. I speak to my step-brother every once in a while and my half-brother... I don't call him my half-brother, he's my brother... I talk to him all the time. He cracks me up. He's too funny.

CT: What was your favorite vacation or vacation spot?

HANSON: Once a year, my dad and my grandpa and some other folks would go deep sea fishing in La Paz, Mexico, and before my grandpa died, when I was 8 years old, I got to go there with him... my Uncle



ATLANTA BRAVES

After being named NL Rookie of the Month for June, Hanson set an Atlanta rookie record with 11 strikeouts July 21 in an 11-3 win over the Giants at Turner Field.

Clifford, my dad and some other friends. It was definitely the most fun vacation I ever went on. I was really close to my grandpa, and being able to go down there and experience that with them was an awesome time. We went a couple of years back, and it's one of my favorite spots. It's kind of in the middle of nowhere, and being out on the water, relaxing, and catching fish is unbelievable. I can't wait to go back.

CT: Are you a big concert-goer? What's the best concert you've been to?

HANSON: I love going to concerts, but a lot of them take place in the summer when we're playing, so I don't get to go as much as I'd like. We went to the (May 28) Kenny Chesney concert (at the Verizon Wireless Amphitheater in Alpharetta), and that was an awesome concert. We had a blast! I went with a group of guys I played with at Gwinnett. We were in the fourth row from the stage, and I turned around and looked back... there were so many people, it was ridiculous.

CT: Do you have any pets?

HANSON: I have a dog, a mastiff named Hooch. He lives with my dad. He weighs more than me. He weighs like 225 pounds. He's enormous - he's a beast. He's about done. He's 8 years old, and that's about how long they usually live. His hips are really bad, so it's definitely going to be sad when his time comes. It was awesome seeing him when (the family) moved here. He hobbles around, but when he saw me, he was freaking out, jumping all over the place.

CT: What's your favorite food?

HANSON: Anything my parents make. My dad is an awesome cook. His spaghetti is my favorite, and my mom makes shepherd's pie. I've never had anyone else make it the way she makes it. It's ground beef, mashed potatoes... a lot of people put gravy in it... she doesn't put in gravy, (but) corn and Velveeta cheese on top. It's so good! She makes garlic bread with it, too, and for whatever reason, the way she cooks it, it's unbelievable. My dad makes these huge meatballs with Italian sausage and all kinds of meat and stuff.

CT: You must be so glad they moved to Atlanta. Do they like it here? Now that they're here, will you stay in Atlanta during the off-season?

HANSON: Yes. My family has moved here for good, and Kris and I are staying here. One of our good buddies that's pitching in Mississippi, Ryne Reynoso, is going to live with us, too. If he plays at Gwinnett next year, he'll live with us then, too. My father is retired, so he didn't have to live any place in particular for work. My sisters were up for the move, so they made it. It's definitely a transition for my sister who is about to be a senior in high school, but we like living close to each other. I'm really close to my sisters, so it's good for all of us. I live in Buckhead, and they live in Kennesaw.

The Atlanta Bar-B-Q Club proudly presents

Inaugural Atlanta BBQ Festival

at Turner Field, Atlanta, GA

The overall winner will be allowed to sell his/her BBQ at an Atlanta Braves game during the 2010 Braves regular season.

Sat., Sept. 12, 2009
10 a.m.-6 p.m.

Teams will be allowed to set up as early as 12 noon on Fri., Sept. 11, 2009.

www.AtlantaBBQFestival.com

THE PAIN & PRIDE OF RAFAEL SORIANO

Finally Healthy, Unflappable Closer's Displaying An Aura Of Invincibility

BY JON COOPER

A SHORT MEMORY can be as important to a relief pitcher as the movement on his fastball or the break on his off-speed pitch.

For Rafael Soriano, a short memory has meant living in the moment while shaking off the unpleasantness of past seasons caused by three major injuries and two surgeries.

Soriano has delivered for the Braves since being acquired from Seattle on Dec. 7, 2006, in exchange for lefty starter Horacio Ramirez. He set career highs for appearances (71), innings (72), saves (9) and strikeouts (70), while setting up Bob Wickman in 2007, and earned the closer's role coming out of spring training last year. But the season turned for the worse when he was limited to 14 appearances due to constant elbow pain. He was shut down in early August and underwent ulnar nerve transposition surgery and had a bone spur removed later that month.

"I got the elbow pain. It was apparent really quickly," he said through an interpreter. "But I felt comfortable because I gave my all. I did the best that I could."

While Soriano harbors no bitterness over the way the season played out or the impatience directed at him by critics and the media, lefty reliever and good friend Mike Gonzalez isn't as reserved.

"Last year, [Soriano] wasn't feeling well, and he was questioned, his work ethic, everything was questioned, because he wasn't feeling well," said Gonzalez. "Obviously, they're seeing what 'Sorie' can do when he's healthy. And with a guy like that, any team - any team would love to have 'Sorie' there."

Any team except this year's National League All-Star team, which passed on Soriano, then failed to win for the 13th straight season and lost by one run for the fourth straight year, giving up the game-winning run in the eighth inning.

Soriano, who had a 1.48 ERA, 12 saves in 13 tries, an opponents' batting average of .158 and a strikeouts-to-walks ratio of nearly 4:1 (58 strikeouts vs. 15 walks), was okay with not going to St. Louis.

"I had a good time with my family [in the Dominican]," said Soriano during the Braves' post-All-Star Game 6-2 homestand. "I forgot all that and came back and everything's new.

"To me, when we're winning, I feel good. You come back the next day and are ready for the next game."

Being ready has not been a problem for Soriano this year, though his development was hindered by Tommy John surgery that caused him to miss most of 2004 and '05, a line drive off the side of his head that cost him the last month of '06, and last year's elbow problem.

"I've been super healthy this year," he said. "I put everything in God's hands. I know that things happen for a reason. When good things come, you take advantage. But I know bad things come, as well."

The good things have overwhelmed the bad thus far, in what is becoming an unforgettable season for the 29-year-old native of San Jose, in the Dominican Republic.

"I don't want to say it's automatic, but it's like it's automatic," said Peter Moylan of Soriano's ninth-inning performances. "It's fun to watch him pitch, and it's also fun knowing that in the ninth inning, there's a 99.9 percent chance he's going to get the job done."

"Man, he's been taking over," agreed Gonzalez, who shared the closer's role with Soriano in April and May. "He's been phenomenal. He's on point. He can spot his fastball anywhere he wants at any given time. He throws strikes. He's a strike machine, and it doesn't hurt to throw 95, 97 [mph]."

Heading into July's final series, Soriano was sporting an ERA of 1.54, the best of any pitcher in baseball who'd thrown at least 40 innings, and was holding opposing batters to a .155 batting average, second in the majors only to Dodgers closer Jonathan Broxton. He converted 14 of 15 save opportunities and allowed only five hits in 60 at-bats with runners on base, while ringing up a 4:1 strikeouts-to-walks ratio. He'd struck out 62 batters (only eight off his career high) in 46 2/3 innings.

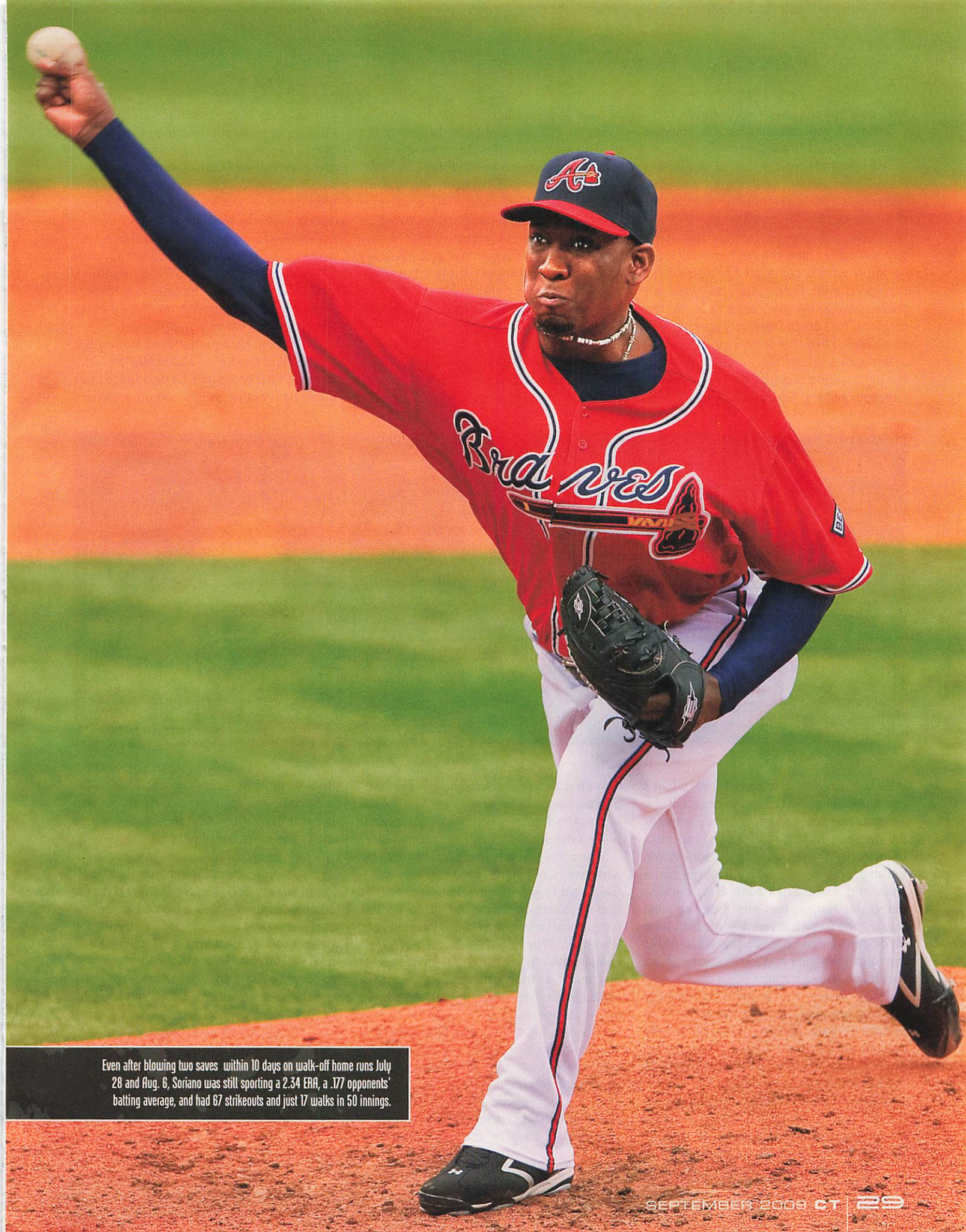
Finally, on July 28, his effectiveness was temporarily interrupted when he gave up a game-ending, two-run homer at Florida to Ross Gload. It was the first homer he allowed in 29 appearances, but he bounced back two nights later to strike out the side in the 10th to preserve a 6-3 win against the Marlins before again falling victim to a home run, this one by Andre Ethier, Aug. 6 in a 5-4 setback to the Dodgers.

Soriano has earned an aura of invincibility that hasn't been seen from a Braves' closer since his baseball idol, John Smoltz.

"I caught [Mark] Wohlers, and I caught [Smoltz] in save situations, and they were very good. But Soriano is right up there,

ATLANTA BRAVES

CONTINUED ON PAGE 30



Even after blowing two saves within 10 days on walk-off home runs July 28 and Aug. 6, Soriano was still sporting a 2.34 ERA, a .177 opponents' batting average, and had 67 strikeouts and just 17 walks in 50 innings.

too," said bullpen coach Eddie Perez.

Soriano's cool brought back memories of another great Braves closer.

"He reminds me a lot of Alejandro Pena," said Perez, referring to Atlanta's closer down the stretch in the 1991 Worst to First season. "Alejandro, in game situations, one-run games, he was the same guy every day. I always asked myself, 'Does he know what's going on right now?' It's the same with Raffy when he goes out there. You know he cares, but in the moment, he's quiet. Other guys get excited, he doesn't. I like that from a closer."

Soriano is taking the excitement out of the ninth inning and making short work of opposing hitters, figuratively and literally. He's throwing an average of 3.99 pitches per plate appearance, and in seven of the 11 appearances he made before surrendering a run July 22 against San Francisco, he'd retired the side in order. When Soriano, who has allowed only three home runs and eight extra-base hits, surrendered the run on two hits (both singles) against the Giants, it was the seventh time he'd been scored upon (45 games) and only the fourth time in his past 28 appearances that he'd yielded a run.

That's where the short-term memory kicks in, because getting a run off Soriano in back-to-back appearances just doesn't happen. As a Brave, he hasn't been scored upon in back-to-back games in his past 76 appearances, dating to Aug. 8 and 11, 2007, and he's blown back-to-back save opportunities only once, in July 2007, when he blew three straight — July 14, 18 and 22. Since that hiccup, he has converted 23 of 27 save opportunities.

Seeing is supposed to be believing, but his Braves teammates don't believe what they've been seeing from Soriano in 2009.

"He's come in and just been utterly dominating," said Matt Diaz. "The great part was he accepted the role early on as set-up guy/closer against right-handed heavy lineups. He excelled in that and obviously has become one of the premier shut-down guys in the game right now."

His mates in the bullpen enjoy watching him go to work.

"It's a good feeling because we get to just relax down there in the bullpen once he goes in," said Eric O'Flaherty, Soriano's teammate in Seattle in 2004-05. "I've seen him do it before. I don't know if I've seen him be this good before."

Soriano's also become a contributor behind the scenes.

"He comes across as a quiet guy, but when we're out in the 'pen, he's very talkative," said Moylan. "He talks about pitches that were thrown during the game. Certain pitches are thrown in certain situations and you think, 'Why would he throw that?' He'll explain it to me. He's a very knowledgeable guy, as far as the game itself."

And while he knows his business, he's not all business.

"Oh, he's hilarious," said Diaz, who first saw the other side of Soriano while playing winter ball with him in Escogido in the Dominican Republic in 2004. "He's a funny guy, playing practical jokes, coming up with handshakes, the whole bit. He's a good guy to have on the team, that's for sure."

If, as Diaz kidded, Soriano might get a little upset with him for letting that cat out of the bag regarding his personality, he's going to be really cross with teammates who brought to light something else he's tried to keep under wraps — that he's added a pitch to his repertoire.

"This year, he's using the cutter a lot," said Perez. "Maybe he didn't want anybody to know, but he does. Watching him throw in the bullpen before he goes out there, I know the other team has no chance every time I see him warming up."

"It's funny. He's just started throwing a cutter out of nowhere," added Moylan. "As if he wasn't nasty enough, he decided to start throwing a cutter, which can go anywhere from 90 to 93 miles an hour, as well."

Soriano, a converted outfielder who became a pitcher in 1999, continues to make believers out of hitters.

"You know what you're going to get," said outfielder Ryan Church, who is actually a career .500 lifetime hitter (2-for-4) against Soriano. "He's going to come out and just pound the zone, throw strikes and basically just go after guys. He's like, 'Here, hit it - if you can.' That's the mental part you need in a closer, and that's what he's got."

For Soriano, closer beats hitter every time.

"Left-handed I had no power as a hitter," he recalled with a laugh. "I find it much easier to pitch as opposed to being a batter, because batters have to face so many different kinds of pitches. I just find it much easier, and I enjoy it."

- Maritza Alarcon served as the interpreter for this story.

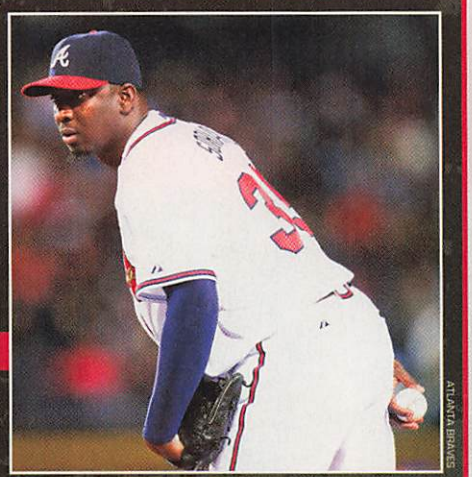
DRESSED TO THE NINES

RAFAEL SORIANO'S move to the closer's spot not only seems to have been a good move, but is backed up by the numbers. Below are Soriano's stats when pitching the eighth and ninth innings.

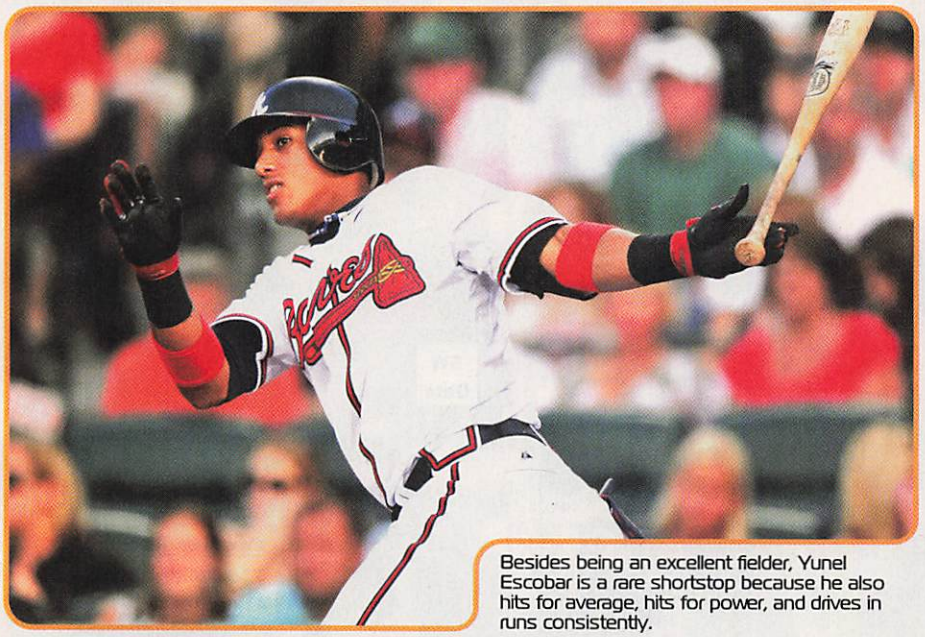
Note that his strikeouts-to-walks ratio, and strikeouts per 9 innings, are way up, on-base percentage is way down, while batting average is just a tad higher. The numbers had been even more distinct until blown saves in Florida on July 28 and in Los Angeles on Aug. 7, which saw his first two ninth-inning homers allowed all season.

SORIANO BY THE INNING

	G	IP	R	H	2B	HR	BB	SO	BA	OBP	ERA	K/9 IP	K/BB
8TH	20	20	3	11	4	1	8	24	.167	.260	1.35	10.8	3.00
9TH	28	26	10	16	1	2	8	35	.170	.235	3.46	12.1	4.38



ESCOBAR'S RARE COMBO OF TALENTS



ATLANTA BRAVES

Besides being an excellent fielder, Yunel Escobar is a rare shortstop because he also hits for average, hits for power, and drives in runs consistently.

BY STEVE FALL

WHEN YUNEL ESCOBAR'S hitting and fielding contributions are combined, it's clear that few shortstops impact the game the way he does.

Escobar had a .305 batting average (through July 30). Since the Braves franchise moved to Atlanta in 1966, only two shortstops have batted .300 (with enough plate appearances to qualify for the batting title). Jeff Blauser reached that level twice. He batted .308 in 1997 and .305 in 1993. Edgar Renteria posted the club's highest mark ever for a shortstop with a .332 season in 2007.

Escobar also supplies extra-base power, a key for a Braves' lineup lacking power. His .841 on-base plus slugging percentage ranked fifth among major league shortstops this year. Escobar's OPS placed third among Atlanta Braves shortstops. Blauser (.887 in 1997) led the way, followed by Renteria (.860, 2007).

The 26-year-old from Cuba has excelled when it comes to delivering baserunners this season. He had driven home 47 of the 221 runners aboard when he batted. His 21.3 percentage ranked third in the National League, trailing only Hanley Ramirez (21.5) and Todd Helton (21.3) by slim margins. He even led Albert Pujols (20.0) and Prince Fielder (20.4), who placed first and second respectively among major league RBI leaders, in this category.

Given his extra-base power, Escobar also is extraordinary at making contact. Pitchers had struck him out just 35 times. Among players with at least 10 home runs and 20 doubles this year, only the Yankees Robinson Cano had fewer strikeouts (34).

Escobar has performed well in the field, too, but not to the level he showed last year. His 4.51 range factor (successful defensive plays made per nine innings) surpassed the NL average at shortstop (4.35). He had registered a +5 in Baseball Info Solution's plus/minus system. That metric reveals how many plays each fielder makes compared to the average player at his position. Escobar's +20 in 2008 trailed only NL Gold Glove award winner Jimmy Rollins (+23) at short.

Javier Vazquez has been a solid pitcher for a long time, but this year he has taken his numbers to the next level. Among Braves pitchers with at least 100 innings, he had the club's third-lowest seasonal ERA (3.01) since 2003. Only Jorge Sosa (2.55 in 2005) and Jair Jurrjens, who had a 2.69 figure this season, had lower ERAs.

Vazquez has made the bullpen's job easier by working 6.68 innings per start this year. None of Bobby Cox's other starters approached that figure. Rookie Tommy Hanson (6.10) and Jurrjens (6.09) came next.

With 158 strikeouts and just 28 walks, Vazquez has also crafted an outstanding 5.64 strikeout-to-walk ratio. Among major league pitchers with at least 100 innings, that trailed only Dan Haren (6.64) and Roy Halladay (6.45). That ratio puts Vazquez in exclusive company in Atlanta Braves history, as well. Only Greg Maddux leads Vazquez in this category, and did so four times. The newest member of the Braves Hall of Fame had a strikeout-to-walk ratio higher than 6.0 all four of those times, and produced an amazing 8.85 figure in 1997.

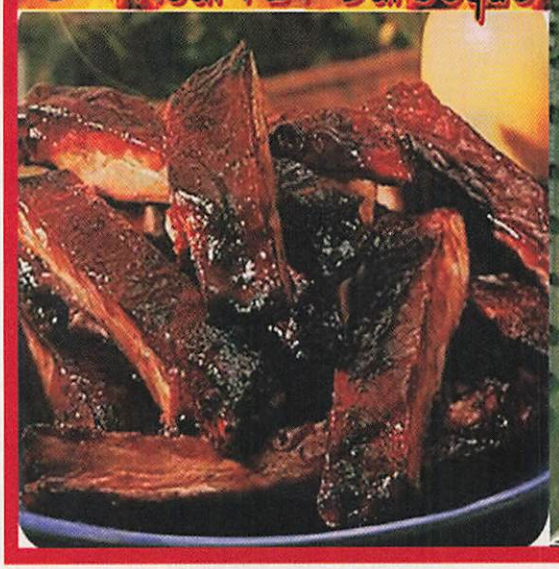
Vazquez has also excelled at keeping runners off the bases, as evidenced by his .271 on-base percentage allowed. He placed fourth in the NL. Only Haren (.228), Chris Carpenter (.263) and Tim Lincecum (.269) have fared better.

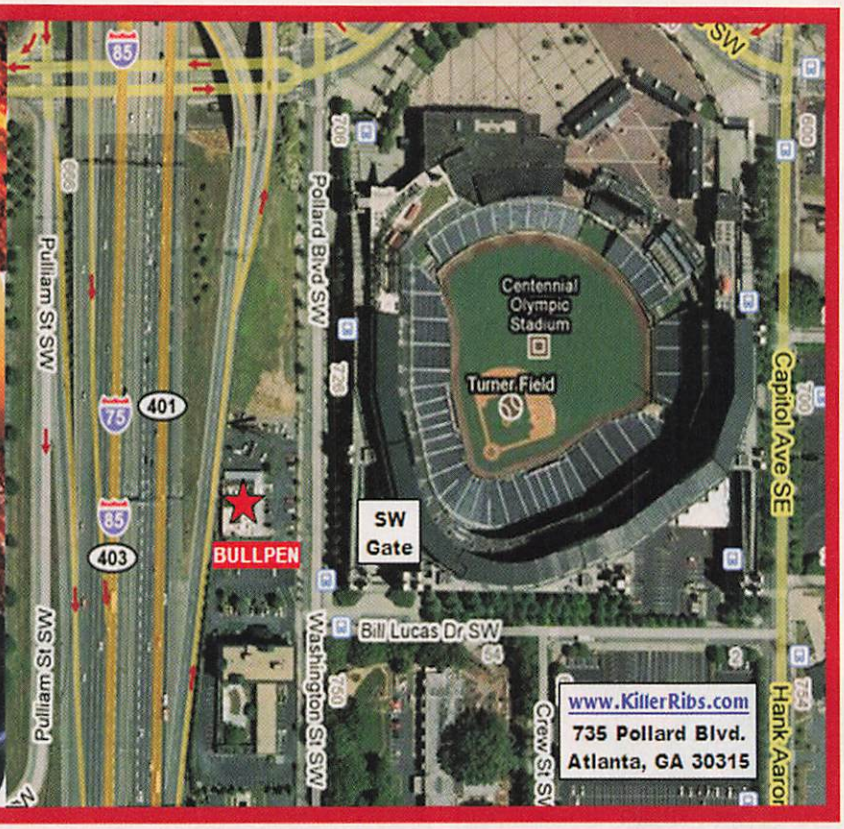
Usually when a pitcher performs as well as this and logs an 8-7 record, poor run support explains the trend. The Braves had scored 5.19 runs per nine innings while Vazquez was pitching, a figure close to the league average. However, the team didn't muster hardly any offense in Vazquez's seven losses, scoring just 13 total runs in those games.

With 13 homers at the time he was acquired from Boston at the trading deadline, Adam LaRoche had not supplied as much power as usual this season. From 2004 through 2006 – when he played for Atlanta – he averaged 30 home runs and 98 RBIs per 650 plate appearances. Those figures dipped to 24 and 89 per 650 plate appearances from 2007 through July 30 of this season. LaRoche also had a higher batting average (.274) and slugging percentage with the Braves (.504) than after getting traded to the Pirates (.265 BA, .470 SLG).

One reason is Cox used LaRoche less often against left-handed pitching than Pittsburgh did. Since he struggles against lefties, the additional playing time hurt his qualitative stats. LaRoche does post big numbers against righthanders, which makes him a major plus for the Braves lineup.

Bullpen
KILLER RIBS & SMOKIN' QUE
Real PIT Barbeque



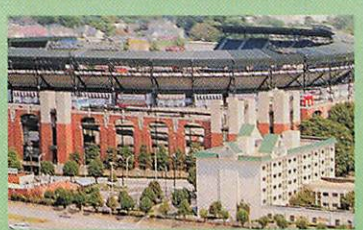


NOW OPEN

A cozy stay at a comfortable price®

COUNTRY INN & SUITES BY CARLSON

Across the Street from Home Plate Entrance!



759 Pollard Boulevard, Atlanta, Ga. 30315

404.658.1961 800.456.4000
www.countryinns.com

- Complimentary High-Speed-Wireless Internet Access
- Complimentary Deluxe Breakfast Bar
- Parking Included with Each Room
- Sparkling Clean New Rooms/Suites
- Bullpen Bar & Grill Next Door

QUALITY

HOTEL DOWNTOWN ATLANTA
89 Luckie Street Atlanta, Ga. 30303

We invite you to enjoy all Atlanta has to offer-right outside our door!

404.524.7991

www.choicehotels.com

Special Game Day Rates Starting At $59 AND UP

- Complimentary Continental Breakfast Bar
- Convenient to Braves MARTA Shuttle at Five Points Station
- 5 Minute Drive to Turner Field

QUALITY

FOR GROUP RATES CALL OUR SALES DEPARTMENT AT **678.420.6441**

Comfort INN | City Center at Turner Field

Comfort INN®

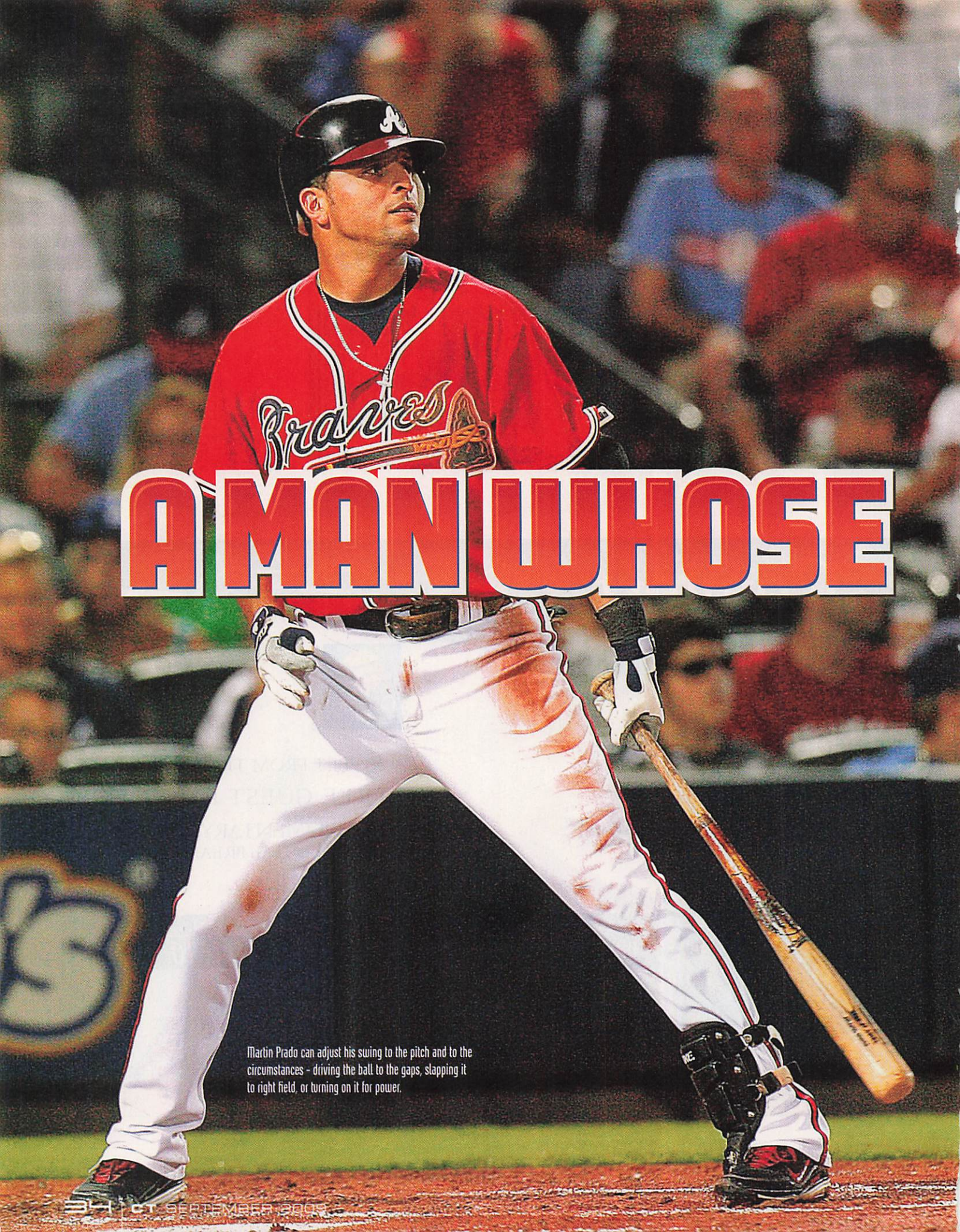
- 30 FEET FROM THE S.W. GATE!
- FREE GUEST PARKING
- COMPLIMENTARY, DELUXE CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST BAR

If location is everything,
we have everything you need on game day

404.658.1610

FOR GROUP RATES
CALL OUR SALES DEPT.
AT 404.658.1610

COMFORT INN CITY CENTER AT TURNER FIELD 795 POLLARD BLVD. ATLANTA, GA. 30315



A MAN WHOSE

Martin Prado can adjust his swing to the pitch and to the circumstances - driving the ball to the gaps, slapping it to right field, or turning on it for power.

THERE'S MORE TO KNOW about Martin Prado than this pitch sequence against the Mets' Mike Pelfrey on July 17, but it's a good start in understanding what the Braves' new starting second baseman is all about.

Pitch 1 - Called strike (0-1). 2 - Called strike (0-2).

Pitch 3 - Ball (1-2).

4 - Foul ball (1-2).

5 - Ball (2-2).

6 - Foul ball (2-2). 7 - Foul ball (2-2). 8 - Foul ball (2-2). 9 - Foul ball (2-2).

10 - Ball (3-2).

Pitch 11 - Home run to left-center.

An 11-pitch at-bat is pretty good work, regardless of the outcome. But to go from an 0-2 hole to a home run over the course of 11 pitches is extraordinary work. That's what Prado specializes in, primarily because he plans and prepares and then is able to execute his strategy with uncommon precision.

He's a man of many swings - not just one - a player who worked his way through the minors for the better part of seven seasons, bided his time on the Braves' bench last year (hitting .320 when he did play), and pounced on the opportunity to finally become a regular this year when Kelly Johnson slumped and was injured.

"He's meant a lot to us," said Bobby Cox. "He's made a huge difference. He's a great two-strike hitter, and when there's a runner on base, he always puts it in play. He's always hit, all the way through the minors."

Prado, an extremely versatile 25-year-old Venezuelan, has a career .302 minor league batting average, including .316 at Richmond in 2007 when he was runnerup for the International League batting title. At press time, he was hitting .315 this year, boosting his career big league average from .307 to start the season to .311.

Yes, Prado can hit, and the jolt his consistent and timely bat has given the lineup since he became a regular June 25 is a major reason the Braves were able to shake their run scoring doldrums and climb above .500 and into the post-season race.

Explaining his 11-pitch home run against Pelfrey, Prado revealed a little about his thought process and his approach to hitting.

"The first pitch was a fastball, and the second pitch was a fastball," he recalled. "I wasn't looking for that, because he threw me fastballs the first at-bat (when he doubled). Then he started throwing me sliders away and fastballs up, and I just battled and fouled off a few. On 3-2, he threw me a changeup in the dirt that I didn't swing at. I thought he'd try to come in on me with the next pitch, and I was right. He threw a fastball on my hands. I didn't think it was going to go out, but it did."

Perhaps because Prado can play practically any position and probably because he's never been a home run hitter, he's always been somewhat of an underdog to make it as a big league regular. But that's never hurt his confidence, or the confidence others have in him.

"His confidence level is high now. He 'gets' what he can do, and he attacks what he sees. He battles. He has the confidence to hit with two strikes. That's what makes him such a good hitter. He's a line drive hitter, and when he misses, that's when he hits it out. He has power and can even hit it out to right-center."

Like many young players of the TBS era, Prado grew up a Braves fan and is thrilled to be playing for them. He credits his mother, Irma, for giving him the encouragement to make it as a professional ballplayer, and he loves his job and isn't afraid to say it.

"My passion has been baseball since I started playing when I was 5," he said. "My mother said when I was real little that I was going to be someone big in baseball, and that put it in my mind. She told me I've got the skills and I just need to work hard. This is what I love to do."

But he nearly pursued a career as an engineer, because after a tryout with the Reds and White Sox, he was told he'd never make it as a ballplayer. However, Petit and the late Julian Perez convinced him he could do it.

"We explained to him that he had the tools, that if he wanted to play, we were here," Petit explained. "I think it's more than just the tools. It's a combination of his maturity and his personality. Now we have a very mature player who has good physical skills.

"He's had to prove at every level of his career that he could play. He had to prove it at the Dominican Summer League Academy, at rookie level, at A-ball and so on, and finally he's proving it at the major league level. It's taken hard work and dedication, but his personality and work ethic will let him reach whatever level he wants to reach."

If anything, Prado pushes himself too hard and takes failed at-bats too seriously.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

TIME HAS COME

MARTIN PRADO LATCHES ONTO OPPORTUNITY WITH HIT, AFTER HIT, AFTER HIT...

BY GARY CARUSO

"At the time we signed him, Martin (pronounced mar-TEEN) showed a lot of tools," said Rolando Petit, one of the two scouts credited for signing Prado and now the Braves' assistant director of Latin American operations. "He could run beyond average, he could make contact and throw and field the ball. He's got what I call a special tool, because he can hit to the other side. He can go to the other side very easily. For the age he was when we signed him, 17, that was very good, a plus for that age.

"Throughout his career he has not only grown up, but he's very serious, very smart. The result is what we're seeing right now."

The fascinating thing about Prado as a hitter is that he seems capable of adjusting his swing so efficiently, depending on the pitch and the situation, to either hit line drives in the gaps, slap the ball to right, foul off pitches when needed, and turn on balls and drive them out of the park.

"He works on hitting in all situations, and he works on hitting the off-speed stuff," said Terry Pendleton. "His preparation is real good. He doesn't just have one approach - he attacks differently, depending on the situation and different types of pitches. He's not just locked in on one approach.

KEVIN C. COX/ GETTY IMAGES

BATTER UP!

MY LOVE FOR BASEBALL BEGAN AS A LITTLE BOY

I'M A GUY THAT SHOWS UP READY to play every day. I just grind it out, give it everything I've got. You don't need motivation at this level. If you can't get up for a game here, you don't belong here.

I think my attitude came from playing in college for a tough coach, Gary Powers at University of Nevada-Reno, who was demanding of us, on and off the field. There are a lot of us in the big leagues that played for him - Lyle Overbay, Corky Miller, Joe Inglett, and Chad Qualls. You played hard every time. He instilled it in all of us.

My approach, hitting-wise, is to be a gap-to-gap type guy, a lot of doubles. The biggest thing for me is to stay within myself, don't try to hit home runs. I hit to contact and hit to all parts of the field, maybe steal a base here and there, and play defense.

I take a lot of pride in playing well defensively. It's one of those things where you might not be on your best game that night, hitting-wise, but you can always play defense. It's something I can control. I work on it constantly, and I think I'm a pretty good outfielder.

Even now, going up to the plate for your first at-bat of the night, I still get nervous every day. That sensation keeps you locked in and motivated and, like I said, if you don't have that feeling, you're probably falling out of love with baseball.

Honestly, I knew I wanted to play baseball from the time I was signed up for tee-ball when I was 4 or 5 years old. It was something I was good at, and I liked the whole competitive thing. Even though I was young, I was driven to play.

> "IF I HAD GOTTEN A THIRD CONCUSSION LAST YEAR, MY CAREER MIGHT HAVE BEEN OVER."

The first thing I'd do when I got home from school was grab my glove and play catch with my dad or throw the ball to myself. I was a San Francisco Giants fan at first. Will Clark was my guy.

But when 1991 came around, I started getting into the Braves, because, at the time, I was a pitcher and they had Tom Glavine, John Smoltz, all those guys. Then I watched when Chipper Jones first came on the scene, and he became my favorite player.

I want the elbow problem taken care of, so I can get back to my normal swing and how I was last year. I hyper-extended my elbow in Philadelphia when I was still with the Mets, five or six days before I got traded. I was running out a ball and trying to beat Ryan Howard to the bag, and his foot ended up stepping on mine and I was airborne. I hurt my elbow on the landing.

The next day, I could barely swing, but I still played. It probably wasn't the best thing, but they called it a mild strain. Everyone plays with some kind of strain, so it wasn't a big deal.

Then I aggravated it in Milwaukee after I joined the Braves. I rested a couple of days and took some cortisone shots. It's been frustrating sitting out.

When I had the concussions last year, two within the space of a month and a half, I didn't look injured, but internally, my brain was gone. I felt like I was on a fishing boat in the middle of the ocean all the time. I got a bit of grief about not playing right away, because I didn't look hurt. And when I did start playing, I wasn't the same as before the concussions.

The first concussion happened at the end of spring training (2008) when I ran into Marlon Anderson. The second one was a month and a half later when I got Yunel Escobar's knee on the back of my head.

I will never change the way I play. Even after the concussions, I was determined not to change. If I had gotten a third concussion last year, my career might have been over.

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

"He's too hard on himself when he doesn't succeed in a big at-bat," said Pendleton. "He looks at every at-bat like it's the biggest at-bat of his career. It's hard to bounce back that way when you make an out. He needs to realize that big at-bat hopefully will come in a World Series someday."

Prado acknowledges he's hard on himself, but he's not likely to lighten up too much, at least no time soon.

"I am hard on myself," he said. "My teammates say, 'Martin, you're hitting .300!' But I don't think about hitting .300 - I'm always thinking about how to get better. This is what I love. This is what I live for.

"I am pushing myself to the next level, to be a better hitter. After baseball, I want to be able to tell my kids that I gave 100 percent for my entire career, that I tried to be the best I can be. People don't understand why I'm like that, but I've been that way my whole career. It's about pride and being the best I can be. That's my goal."

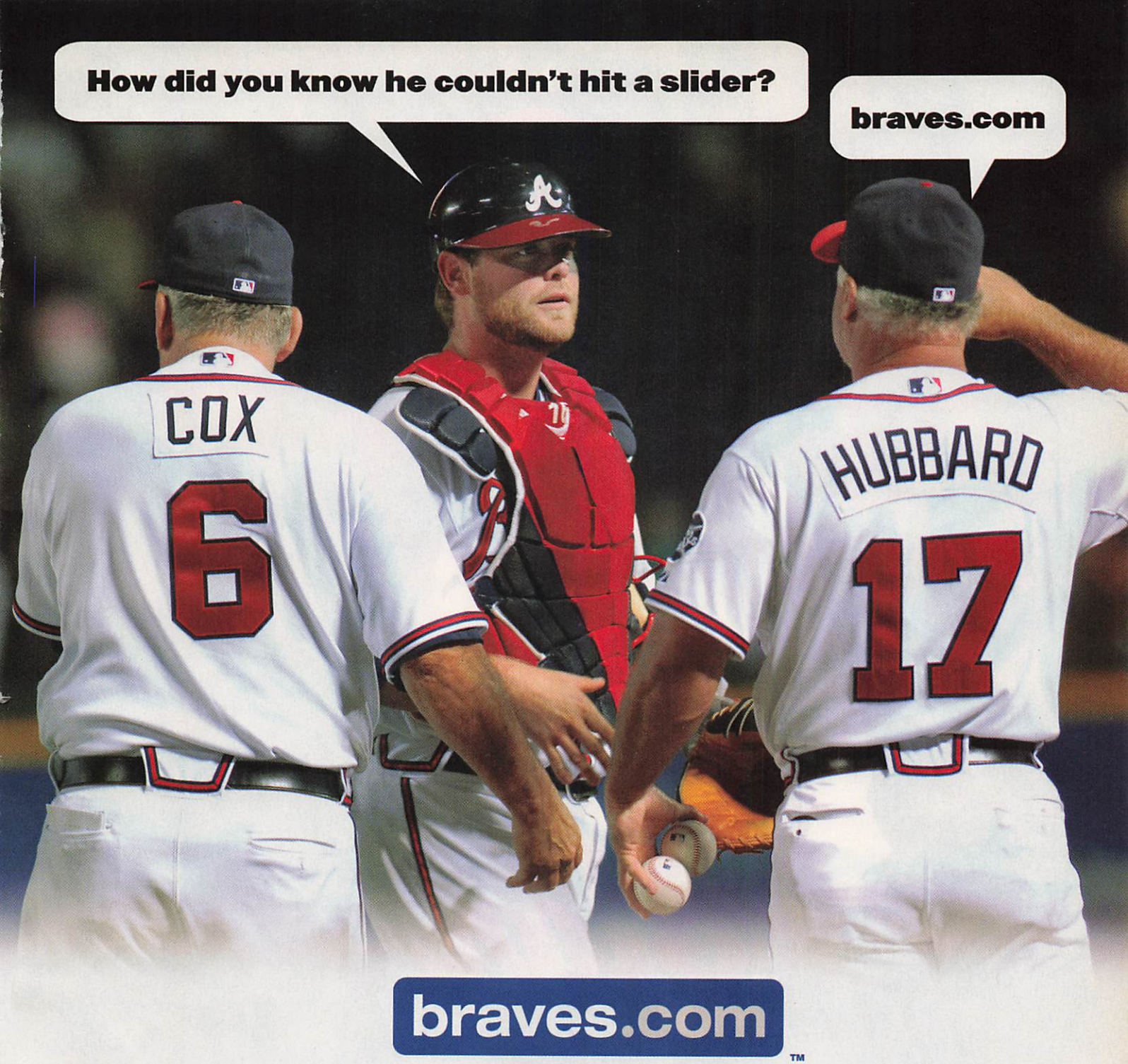
The 6-1, 190-pounder who can play any infield position - or any outfield position (he plays there regularly in winter ball) - doesn't like to miss playing time, even when injured. After all, he's worked too long and too hard to take off a day unless he has no choice. He's been fighting a left groin strain for three years, and he took a wicked line drive on his left ankle during batting practice July 30. Cox and Frank Wren call him a "warrior" for his insistence on playing, even with pain. A perfect example was when the batting practice liner somehow missed the protective screen at second base and drilled his ankle.

"Bobby told me to take a day off," said Prado, who was NL Player of the Week for the period ending July 5 when he batted .577 with eight doubles, a home run and six RBIs. "I told him I was ready if he needed me, but he said no. The next day I didn't play either. I didn't feel good, but it wasn't like I couldn't play, and I pinch-hit late against the Dodgers. The next day I was back in the lineup.

"The groin has bothered me the last three years, on and off. I get treatment and exercise and try to make it strong, but the doctor says I need to rest it for two to three months. But three months without baseball (Venezuelan winter league) isn't good for me!"

Prado knows a ballplayer's time only comes around once and doesn't last for long. He wants to take full advantage of every game while he can.

"Being in the lineup and trying to be the best I can be with my teammates - that's magical!" he said.



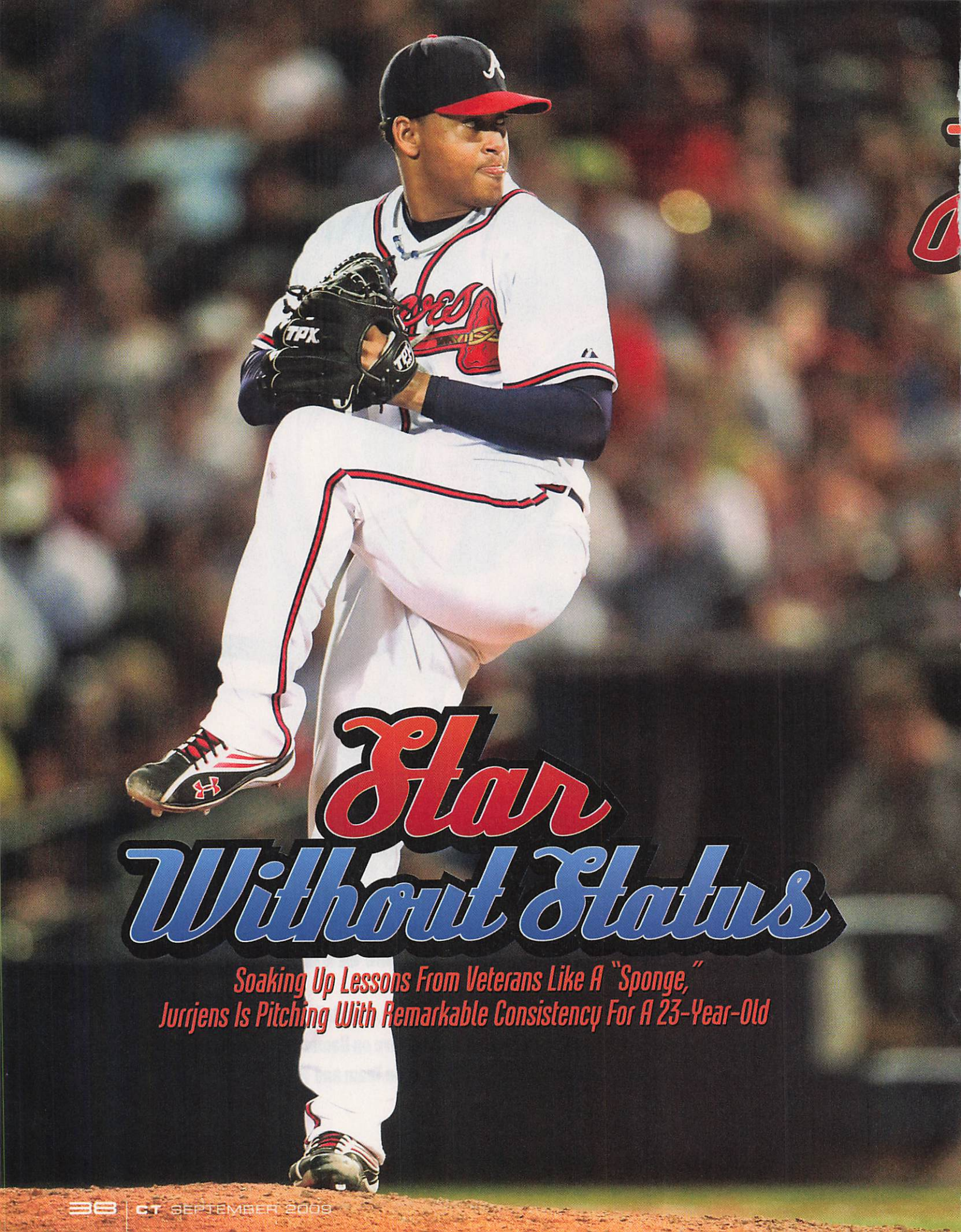
braves.com™

braves.com is where Braves fans go

Get official gear, follow breaking news, buy tickets, watch live baseball on MLB.TV, follow live action on Gameday, listen live on Gameday Audio and stay connected with MLB.com Mobile Team and Video Alerts.

Braves shop · MLB.TV · MLB.com · MLB.com/mobile · GAMEDAY AUDIO · MLB.com gameday · bravesbeisbol.com

© 2009 MLB Advanced Media, L.P. Major League Baseball trademarks and copyrights are used with permission of the applicable MLB entities. All rights reserved. Photo: Getty Images.



Star Without Status

Soaking Up Lessons From Veterans Like A "Sponge," Jurrjens Is Pitching With Remarkable Consistency For A 23-Year-Old

BY GARY CARUSO

AIR JURRJENS has been among the National League leaders in earned run average all season. He also ranks near the top in another not-so-enviable category - lack of respect.

Milwaukee Brewers broadcasters Brian Anderson and Bill Schroeder had barely begun their coverage of the July 24-26 series against the Braves at Miller Park when they bemoaned the prospect of their team having to face the "top three starters" on the Atlanta staff - Javier Vazquez, Tommy Hanson and Derek Lowe.

With all due respect to Vazquez, Hanson and Lowe, the Milwaukee announcers were committing a grave - but not uncommon - oversight. At that time, Jurrjens had the fifth-best ERA in the National League (2.67), something Vazquez, Hanson and Lowe couldn't match, giving him every right to be considered among the Braves' "top three starters" and possibly even the team's ace.

Even at this writing, Jurrjens still ranked 11th in the NL with a 3.01 ERA, a notch behind Vazquez, who was 10th at 2.99. It took a couple of untimely home runs in Jurrjens' first two August starts to push his ERA over 3.00 for the first time all season. That's how good the righthander from Curacao has been in just his second full big league season. Nevertheless, respect, recognition and star status have been slow to find him in the depth of the Braves' excellent starting rotation made up of recognized veterans like Vazquez and Lowe and even one of baseball's most highly regarded rookies in Hanson.

It's good to know that Jurrjens isn't losing any sleep over the lack of recognition. He's an admitted "laid-back" type of guy. Plus he and everyone else with the Braves know how well he's pitched and that the appropriate star status will follow if he continues to perform as he has the last year and a half.

"I'm used to it (lack of respect and attention)," he said. "As long as me and my family are happy, that's all that matters. I'm not doing it for others. We're laid-back people. I don't even ask about what's going on back home (recognition in the Curacao media), because all I want to be able to do when I go home after the season is to relax.

"Everyone has their opinions (about who the top pitchers are). That's okay. Forget me. Look at Javier Vazquez. He's the prefect example. He was among the leaders in strikeouts and everything and still didn't make the All-Star team."

Truth be told, many Braves fans may be as guilty of underrating "JJ" - as he's known in the clubhouse - as Milwaukee broadcasters and others. That's because he's come so far so fast and is still very young and relatively inexperienced.

Consider two rather enlightening and almost stunning facts:

- Jurrjens, age 23 (born Jan. 29, 1986), is only 7 months older than Hanson (born Aug. 28, 1986).
- When the Braves broke spring training in 2008, he was a rookie and Atlanta's fifth starter.

"He's got another year of experience under his belt," said pitching coach Roger McDowell of how Jurrjens has improved. "Last year, he was our No. 5 starter coming out of spring training, and by July, he was the go-to guy because of all the injuries we had. He had to grow up quickly, and he did."

ATLANTA BRAVES

Jurrjens' fastball can reach 95-96 miles per hour, but he likes to "hide" his top speed and use it only as an "extra pitch" when it's needed.

As a 22-year-old, Jurrjens led the Braves in wins (13), starts (31), innings (188 1/3) and strikeout (139). His win total ranked second among rookies in Atlanta history (Craig McMurtry 15 in 1983) and he set an Atlanta rookie strikeout record. He also finished third in the NL Rookie of the Year voting.

Acquired along with outfielder Gorkys Hernandez (since traded) from Detroit following the 2007 season for shortstop Edgar Renteria, he was the first played obtained by Frank Wren after he took over as general manager.

Jurrjens has displayed remarkable consistency this year. In fact, through Aug. 2, he had allowed 2 or fewer earned runs in 17 of 23 starts (73.9 percent). That was tied for third in the NL (trailing only San Francisco's Matt Cain and Arizona's Dan Haren) and tied for fourth in the majors (Jarrod Washburn, Seattle/Detroit).

How has Jurrjens changed in the course of a year and been able to improve his consistency?

"The big difference for me this year is being able to watch Javy Vazquez pitch and putting some of his game in mine," said Jurrjens. "He knows how to set up hitters, and he does a lot of work between his starts. One day, I want to have a career like he has."

According to McDowell, it isn't only Vazquez among teammates and former teammates who have influenced Jurrjens' impressive development.

"Last year, he had (John) Smoltz and (Tom) Glavine and (Tim) Hudson around to learn from, and this year he has Lowe and Vazquez and Hudson," McDowell said. "JJ is like a sponge around those older guys. He listens to them all and lets everything filter in to what he does."

This year, Jurrjens is especially close to Vazquez. He regards the 33-year-old Vazquez almost like a mentor, but Vazquez, who is having a career season, says the relationship is more like two friends sharing tips.

"Javy is one of my best friends on the team," said Jurrjens. "I watch how he sets up hitters. At times, we go over an at-bat or a hitter. Even when we're pitching, sometimes we give each other tips during the game."

Vazquez said, "I feel like we learn from each other. Just because I've been pitching longer and have been in the majors longer than him doesn't mean I know more than him. We learn from each other, tell each other our points of view.

"JJ's got great ability that I didn't have at an early age like him. He's very advanced for his age, and he's a very intelligent pitcher."

Another lesson Jurrjens is learning from Vazquez that may prove even more important than how to set up hitters is how to take care of his body and especially his arm. Vazquez has followed a regimented workout routine religiously for years, and seeing its benefits has made an impact on Jurrjens.

"He sticks to his program every day," Jurrjens said of Vazquez. "Younger guys sometimes tend to let it go a day or two, but he never does that. He's been following his program for a long time and works out with

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

ATLANTA BRAVES

THE HEAT IS BUILDING ON METS' OMAR MINAYA

THERE IS GROWING industry buzz that the Mets might force general manager **Omar Minaya** into an advisory position and replace him with assistant GM **John Ricco** at the end of the season. The Mets are not even considering such a change at this time, one source said. But don't be surprised if Ricco continues to assume a more visible role with the team, particularly in dealing with the media. Minaya is not detail-oriented and does not always communicate effectively.

AB

The Dodgers were close to acquiring Padres closer **Heath Bell** at the non-waiver trading deadline on July 31. Los Angeles offered a multi-player package that the Padres were willing to accept, but then had misgivings and chose not to complete the deal, two major-league sources said. Another source, however, put the onus for the failed negotiations on the Padres, saying that the team changed the players it wanted from the Dodgers. Bell, a righthander, and **George Sherrill**, a lefthander, would have given the Dodgers a powerful setup tandem in front of closer **Jonathan Broxton**.

AB

The Padres' trade of righthander **Jake Peavy**, the 2007 NL Cy Young Award winner, to the White Sox should make it much easier for them to retain **Heath Bell** and first baseman **Adrian Gonzalez** in 2010 and beyond. The team once again will be open to listening to offers for both players this off-season. But the Peavy deal greatly reduced the financial pressure to make such moves. Peavy will earn $48 million between 2010 and '12.

AB

One rival general manager says the Nationals' **Nyjer Morgan** is making catches that no Washington centerfielder has made in five years. Morgan, the Nationals' leadoff hitter, brings the team more energy, and new manager **Jim Riggleman** is instilling more discipline. The Nats perform defensive drills before every home game, and Riggleman holds a meeting after every game, win or lose. He also has required players to wear their uniforms properly and appealed to the professionalism of his veterans.

AB

Brewers GM **Doug Melvin** advocates that the signing deadline for draft picks should be before the July 31 non-waiver deadline, not after (currently Aug. 17). Melvin's reasoning is sound: If a team signed most or all of its picks before July 31, it might then be more inclined to move a young player in a trade.

AB

The Rockies, after adding righthander **Rafael Betancourt** and lefty **Joe Beimel** to their bullpen, were still looking for one more reliever, with Orioles lefty **Mark Hendrickson** one possibility. One National League GM predicted that the Rockies would beat out the Dodgers in the NL West, saying Colorado has the better all-around club.

AB

One scout views the Giants' **Eugenio Velez** the same way he viewed the Marlins' **Emilio Bonifacio** early in the season. Velez, the scout says, is feasting on fastballs. Once opponents start throwing him breaking balls, his party will end.

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

the same effort every day."

Vazquez says he got serious about taking care of himself in 1996 when he was still at the Class-A level in the Montreal farm system.

"I developed a program after my third year of pro ball," he said. "That's when I began my shoulder (workout) program. During the 1996 season, I had a little tendinitis. They did an MRI and found a small tear. I started the program then, and I've never stopped doing it.

"JJ has a good shoulder program, too, and works hard at it. He has a good routine of running and working out. Routine is the most important thing for a starting pitcher. My routine starts the day after I pitch. I do my running and work out and do core exercises and my shoulder program. The second day, I throw a bullpen session. The third day, I lift weights and do the shoulder program. In the off-season, I have a trainer and keep up the routine. It's very important and helps me a lot. Some guys take it for granted and don't do that. You've got to put in the work, and JJ understands that. The way I look at it, you work hard for 15 to 20 years in this game, and then you can relax!"

Of course, a pitcher can work out as much as he wants, but if he doesn't have the stuff to go with his dedication, it won't matter. Jurrjens has all the ingredients.

"His stuff speaks for itself," pointed out McDowell. "He has the makeup and the stuff to go with it."

A particularly interesting part of Jurrjens' repertoire is the top-end fastball he keeps tucked away until he really needs it. He usually cruises along with a fastball in the low 90s. Then when he gets in a tight spot or thinks hitters are looking for 92, he reaches back and pops one at 95-96 miles per hour.

"You can throw hard and still get hit," Jurrjens reasoned. "But if you hide it, throw 91-92 and then 95-96, it's like having another pitch. Changing speeds is everything."

How far will all this knowledge, skill, hard work and dedication take Jurrjens?

"Guys like that can be as good as they want to be," said McDowell. "It's up to that person.

"He seems older than 23. It's the way he conducts himself. He's good, but he still works to be better, and you have to do that to be successful. He knows that. He works those four days between starts, and it shows. He understands what has to be done in order to give himself a better chance to succeed."

It sounds like the best is yet to come.

Maddux, standing before a podium made of his uniform number, addresses the sellout crowd of some 900 at the Braves Hall of Fame luncheon and then receives a replica of his Monument Grove Walk of Fame plaque from team president John Schuerholz (inset).

"THE BEST THERE'S EVER BEEN"

Greg Maddux Receives Franchise's Ultimate Honors In Words, Induction, And Number Retirement

By Mark Bowman of MLB.com

Photos courtesy of the Atlanta Braves

GREG MADDUX HAS ALWAYS COMMANDED THE SPOTLIGHT, but has certainly never demanded or felt entirely comfortable basking in its glow.

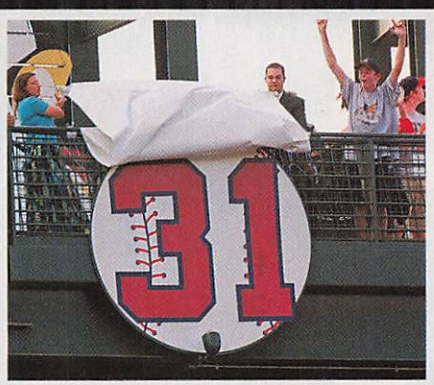
Over the course of 23 major league seasons, Maddux gained regular acclaim and deflected most of it in the direction of those teammates, managers, coaches and trainers, who now find themselves celebrating the immortalization of his legendary career.

As Maddux was inducted into the Braves Hall of Fame on July 17, he found himself surrounded by appreciative fans and humbled by the compliments provided by some of the other legendary figures that will one day share a place with him in Cooperstown.

"I used to watch you and think, 'That's not the best fastball in the game, that's not the best curveball, that's not the best slider, it's not even the best changeup. But that's the best pitcher that I've ever seen' - and I mean that very sincerely," said Don Sutton, a Hall of Fame pitcher and long-time Braves broadcaster, during the ceremony.

Fearless in the process of notching 355 career wins, four Cy Young Awards, and a record 18 Gold Glove Awards, Maddux has a reserved and private personality that led him to blush at some of the memories Sutton, Tom Glavine, Bobby Cox and others provided while recognizing the greatness he demonstrated during his

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



Maddux and his family and Braves officials were joined by fellow Braves Hall of Famers (from left) Paul Snyder, Phil Niekro, Ralph Garr, Dale Murphy, David Justice, Bill Bartholomay and (back row) Pete Van Wieren to witness the unveiling of Maddux's number high above left field (inset).

11 seasons (1993-2003) in Atlanta.

"I want to thank you for making me a better player," Glavine said via a video that he prepared, because family obligations prevented him from attending the Hall of Fame luncheon at the Omni Hotel and later the pre-game retirement of his uniform number. "I think when you are around great players, they make you better."

There will come a day when Glavine, John Smoltz, Chipper Jones and Cox are all immortalized by the Braves. But the first act of honoring one of the key figures that helped the Braves gain unmatched success throughout the 1990s and the early portion of the 21st century was the celebration of Maddux, who holds franchise career records for ERA (2.63) and winning percentage (.866).

Hours after making him the latest inductee into their Hall of Fame, the Braves placed Maddux among their greats by retiring his No. 31. Hank Aaron (44), Dale Murphy (3), Warren Spahn (21), Eddie Mathews (41) and Phil Niekro (35) are the only other members of the franchise to ever be bestowed with this honor.

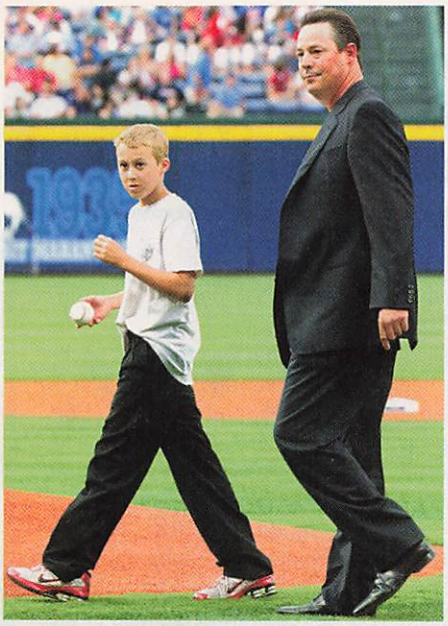
With his wife, Kathy, wiping away tears and the current Braves team standing in unison behind him, Maddux looked to the left of the left-field foul pole and saw the unveiling of his No. 31.

Then, to cap the ceremony, he and his son, Chase, simultaneously threw ceremonial first pitches to Eddie Perez, who caught more of Maddux's games than any other catcher, and Chipper Jones, who is the lone active Braves player who played with Maddux.

"As a kid, you never really think of this," Maddux said. "You think about striking out the best hitter or hitting a home run or stealing a base. You don't think about having your number retired or going to the Hall of Fame. That stuff is so far-fetched. You just want to stick to the basics and have a little success."

During his first three years with the Braves (1993-95), Maddux completed his run of winning four consecutive Cy Young Awards - a major league first - and in the process, he went 55-18 with a 1.90 ERA. Further defining the greatness of this span, during the 1994 and '95 seasons, he was 35-8 with a 1.60 ERA.

There were 31s all over Turner Field on the evening of July 17.



Maddux and his son, Chase, had the dual honor of throwing out ceremonial first pitches.

"It was just remarkable how every time he went out there, he had his game plan and was able to execute it with pitch after pitch after pitch," said Braves president John Schuerholz, who was responsible for bringing Maddux to Atlanta via free agency before the start of the 1993 season.

While delivering his short speech at the luncheon, Cox talked about how many managers and media members often ask him, "Was he the best pitcher I ever saw? Was he the smartest pitcher I ever saw? Was he the best competitor I ever saw? Was he the best teammate I ever saw?"

"The answer is 'yes' to all of the above," Cox said. "He was quite a pitcher."

With the eighth-most wins in history, Maddux has the credentials that prove he's one of the best who ever had the opportunity to stand on a major league mound. But the unselfish behavior that made him a valuable teammate was primarily recognized solely by those who saw what he did on the days that he wasn't pitching.

"I have one huge regret," said Sutton, who notched 324 career wins. "I regret that I never had the chance to be your teammate. You would have made me better."

When asked to choose the most memorable of Maddux's great starts, both Jones and Schuerholz pointed to Game 1 of the 1995 World Series, when the righthander silenced the powerful Cleveland lineup with a two-hitter. Five days later in Game 5, he surrendered four runs in seven innings and suffered the loss.

Glavine, concerned that this meant he might need to adjust the approach he took in beating the Indians in Game 2, approached Maddux, who told the left-hander to stick to his plan and ignore the Game 5 results, which he said were simply a product of a bad performance.

"Thanks for that tip and that advice," said Glavine, who limited the Indians to one hit over eight scoreless innings during the decisive 1-0, Game 6 victory.

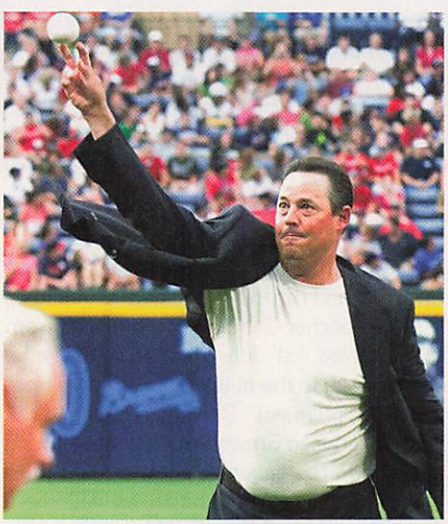
When Maddux notched his 300th career victory with the Cubs on Aug. 7, 2004, the Braves were in Arizona's visiting clubhouse celebrating an achievement that he still says was trumped by the one he experienced on Oct. 28, 1995, when he and the rest of his Braves teammates celebrated the only World Championship captured by one of Atlanta's professional sports teams.

"I know that October night in Atlanta was more special than the day that I won my 300th game," Maddux said.

David Justice, whose solo homer provided the only support Glavine needed on that memorable October night, and long-time broadcaster Pete Van Wieren were among the organization's legendary figures who joined the current Braves to celebrate all the memorable nights that Maddux provided throughout his Atlanta career.

In the process, they helped Maddux stir up memories of those early days in Atlanta, when he and Glavine and Smoltz couldn't grasp the significance of the journey that they were enjoying together.

"Everyone says to enjoy your career, because time will fly by," Maddux said. "It flew by. We had a lot of fun. We won a lot of games, and we had a lot of fun winning them."



Maddux, who was pitching for the Dodgers only a few months earlier, demonstrates he still has sound mechanics in making his delivery.

HYATT PLACE

Downtown
Walk or free shuttle to restaurants, shops, attractions – 3 mile radius

24 Hour Food Service! • Specialty Wine and Beer Bar • Freshly prepared Snacks and Salads in our Bakery Cafe • Starbucks!

A BRAND NEW all suite hotel that puts style, innovation and The Hyatt Touch within everyones's reach. 42" Flat Panel HDTV, Hyatt Grand Bed, Cozy Corner, Refrigerator and Coffee Maker.
Personalized Service For Each Guest!

COMPLIMENTARY
- Continental Breakfast Buffet
- Wi-Fi throughout Hotel
- Daily in-suite Coffee
- Stay Fit Fitness Center
- Shuttle

404-577-1980 • Toll Free: 888-492-8847
or Book online at: www.hyattplace.com
Special Rate Code: BRAV
330 Peachtree Street, N.E.
Atlanta, GA 30308

BY BILL BALLEW

TWO NO-HITTERS IN FOUR DAYS - DELGADO, RASMUS AUTHOR GEMS

THERE'S EVEN MORE pitching on the way for Atlanta! Within a period of only four days, two righthanders in the farm system both pitched 7-inning no-hitters.

Rome's Randall Delgado did it Aug. 7, striking out nine and walking only one in a 2-0 victory over Savannah. Then on Aug. 11, Danville's Cory Rasmus, working his way back from surgery that caused him to miss most of the last two seasons, allowed just one walk and struck out nine in beating Princeton, 13-0. It was only his third start of the year.

When Rome manager Randy Ingle was asked earlier this season about the young pitchers from the 2008 draft on his roster, he stopped and said, "Don't forget about Randall. He may have the best chance of all, and he's just a puppy."

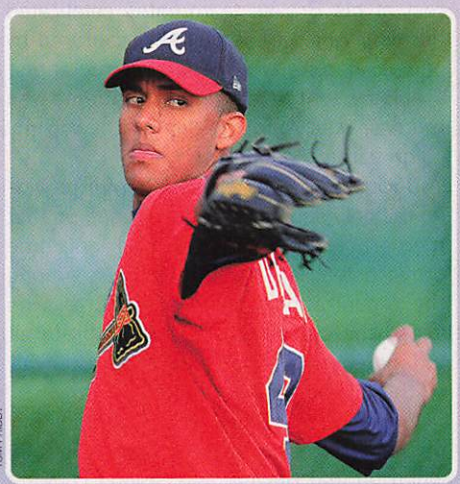
Ingle was referring to Delgado, who was not a member of the 2008 draft class, yet at 19 is the same age as the high school pitchers the Braves selected last year. Though the Panama native struggled for the first three-plus months of the current season, Ingle and pitching coach Jim Czajkowski were confident success would come.

"You could see it at times - the pitches, the body, the all-around ability," Ingle said. "It was just a matter of everything coming together and working in sync."

That is exactly what started to happen as July turned to August. Delgado, who battled frequent control problems that included a season-high seven walks in two innings on July 10, owned a 1-8 record and a 5.45 ERA after suffering a loss to Greensboro on July 16. Yet just as it seemed time was running out for Delgado this year, he put together a string of four outstanding starts in which he went 3-0 with a 1.38 ERA in 26 innings.

The highlight was the final game of that foursome, his no-hitter at State Mutual Stadium.

"He was phenomenal," Ingle said. "That was the best pitching performance we've had so far this year and as good a performance as I've seen in a long time. He had all three of his pitches, and he could throw them anywhere and at any time he wanted. He was as good as a pitcher can be."



TOM PRIDDY

Randall Delgado struck out nine and walked just one in a seven-inning no-hitter, highlighting a four-game stretch in which he was 3-0 with a 1.38 ERA over 26 innings.

After Delgado pitched in the Dominican Summer League in 2007, the Braves pushed him last year by assigning him to Danville instead of the Gulf Coast League. He responded by going 3-8 with a 3.13 ERA in 14 starts and led the Appalachian League with 81 strikeouts in 69 innings.

"He's slowed the game down and started to understand there has to be a rhyme and reason to every pitch he throws," Czajkowski said. "He's confident now, so much so that no matter what situation he's in, he's got the pitches and the ability to work out of it."

Delgado throws the ball on a sharp downhill plane with a high three-quarters delivery, which creates impressive movement on his pitches as well as deception for the hitter. His fastball is in the low 90s.

"There's been a lot of hard work on his part," Czajkowski said. "He's been able to do things in the bullpen command-wise and with his mechanics for a while, but now he's taking that into the games. That performance (the no-hitter) was not only exciting for me, but for Kent Willis, our pitching coordinator, who was here, too."

GWINNETT
TRIPLE A

Todd Redmond has been showing the form for the past two months that led to his earning Southern League Pitcher of the Year honors in 2008. After struggling with walks early in the season and pacing the International League in home runs allowed through early August, the righthander won four straight decisions and had not suffered a loss since June 19. In back-to-back starts, on July 30 and Aug. 4, Redmond did not give up an earned run in a combined 13 innings...

When pitcher **James Parr** returned from the disabled list July 23, **Bobby Brownlie** moved back to the bullpen and **Tony Armas, Jr.**, was released. Pitching coach **Derek Botelho** praised Brownlie for his three strong starts in Parr's absence, but with the return of **Jo-Jo Reyes** to the rotation, as well, there was no room for Brownlie or Armas...

John Hamala has shown more consistency since re-joining the starting rotation in mid-July. Hamala admitted he was uncomfortable working out of the Gwinnett bullpen during the first half of the month. Hamala went 3-0 over four outings, from July 19-Aug. 3, allowing seven earned runs in 24 innings...

Wes Timmons feared he would miss the rest of the season after suffering a broken thumb while making a swipe tag at third base on July 20. He was placed in a cast the next day, but an examination a week later revealed the bone chip was healing and his

tendons were stronger than expected. That enabled the International League All-Star to start preparing for a return to the field in mid-August. Upon his return to the lineup, he owned an IL-leading 40-game on-base streak...

First baseman **Barbaro Canizares** made the rounds in mid-July by playing in both the Futures Game in St. Louis and the Triple-A All-Star Game in Portland during a four-day span. Upon his return to Gwinnett, Canizares' bat had slowed, leading to an 8-for-49 performance in his first 12 games after the break. He rebounded to post nine hits over a five-game hitting streak, from July 29-Aug. 4...

Mariano Gomez is in his 10th professional season and his first with the Braves after signing as a minor league free agent over the winter. The lefthander is putting together one of his finest years with a 1.97 ERA, an opponents' batting average of .199 and seven saves in as many opportunities through Aug. 9. Gomez is on the verge of becoming the first Honduras-born player to reach the major leagues...

Brooks Conrad, who made a favorable impression during a callup to Atlanta in July, demonstrated his versatility upon his return to Gwinnett. Conrad made starts at all four infield positions over a four-game stretch by playing shortstop on July 24, second base on July 25, third base on July 27, and first base on July 28.

MISSISSIPPI
DOUBLE A

The M-Braves understand why Baseball America ranked **Jason Heyward** and **Freddie Freeman** as the No. 1 and No. 11 prospects, respectively, in the minor leagues during the magazine's mid-season ratings. The dynamic duo has helped the team turn its season around since their July 3 promotion to the Southern League. Heyward was batting .411 with six homers and 23 RBIs in his first 107 at-bats, while Freeman was hitting .264 with two homers and 22 RBIs in 110 trips to the plate...

Heyward has attracted several comparisons to former All-Star Darryl Strawberry, who played his Double-A ball with the Jackson Mets of the Texas League in 1982. Strawberry hit .283 with nine triples, 34 homers, 97 RBIs, 45 stolen bases, 100 walks and 145 strikeouts that year. A National League scout said while watching Heyward in late July, "There's lots of guys you can

THE GAME IS FASTER, BUT I'M CATCHING UP

EDITOR'S NOTE
The Braves drafted Mycal Jones, 22, in the fourth round (118th player overall) in June out of Miami-Dade Community College. Scouts rave about his outstanding speed, as well as his all-around skills at shortstop. At Danville, he was batting .272 with four homers and 20 RBIs in his first 42 games. Listed at 5-10, 165, he also was a perfect 10-for-10 on stolen base attempts.

IT'S DEFINITELY been a big change, kind of a culture shock, coming from Miami, where I went to school, and Jacksonville, where I'm from, and going to Danville. I'm getting used to it, and the people here in Danville really love us. It's a lot of fun playing in front of fans that are so passionate and knowledgeable about the game.

As far as the baseball is concerned, I really didn't have any idea what to expect when I signed. I just wanted to get here and start playing. Honestly, I love the part of having the mornings off and not having to get up and go to class. But it is different playing all of our games at night. At my college, we didn't even have lights.

It took a lot of hard work to get to where I am right now. I wasn't drafted out of high school. I went to the University of North Florida and then Miami-Dade. When I graduated from high school, I weighed 145 pounds. I put on 30 pounds my freshman year with a lot of work in the weight room. That was a big help in making me stronger on the field.

I did a lot of hitting drills with my coaches before and after practice. I was fortunate to have two great coaches in Dusty Rhodes at UNF and Steve Hertz at Miami-Dade. They really helped me with my hitting, as well as my defense.

> "IN MY FIRST HOME GAME WITH DANVILLE, I WAS PART OF A TRIPLE PLAY THAT WAS EXCITING."

The first day of the draft was tough. I had heard that I could go anywhere from the second to the eighth round. It was very nerve-wracking that first night, when they had three rounds on television. I was just sitting there, watching and hoping and praying that my name would get called.

It didn't, and then the next day I was working at a baseball camp at North Florida. We were taking a lunch break and I heard my name called on the computer as one of the first picks of the day. I felt lucky and relieved to get that over with so early in the fourth round.

In my first home game with Danville, I was part of a triple play that was exciting. There were runners on first and second when a line drive was hit to me. I caught the ball, and the guy on second was headed to third, so I knew I had him easy. It was just a matter of getting the ball in time to the first baseman. It was a lot of fun and a lot of people were talking about it, but it was really just a matter of being at the right place at the right time.

It's a grind playing every day. We only had two off-days during the first six or seven weeks of the season. With the heat and the humidity, it can wear you down a little bit. The speed of the game is also a little quicker than what I experienced at the college level. Playing so much, you adjust to it naturally, and I think I've caught up to it now.

I know it's only been a couple months, but I definitely love being a member of the Atlanta Braves. Growing up in Jacksonville, the Braves are the closest team and I was always a huge Braves fan, especially of Deion Sanders and (John) Smoltz and those guys. Now, I come to the park every day with the desire to do everything I can to help my team win. Hopefully, if I keep making improvements, I'll work my way up and make it to Atlanta one day.

compare him to, but I think he's going to be just fine being Jason Heyward."...

Jose Ortegano and **Craig Kimbrel** had early success with the M-Braves after the two pitching prospects were promoted from Myrtle Beach on July 28. The left-handed Ortegano, who tossed six shutout innings in his second start for Mississippi, was 3-0 with a 0.90 ERA in his first three starts, allowing two runs, 17 hits and three walks while striking out 21 in 20 innings. Kimbrel, who was credited with the victory in his first outing, had two saves in his first two opportunities...

Deunte Heath has found a home in the bullpen after struggling with his command as a starter during the first half. Heath had 31 walks in 59 innings as a member of the M-Braves' rotation and spent most of June at Gwinnett, where he averaged a walk per inning. After moving to relief, the hard-throwing righthander had five straight shutout appearances from July 28-Aug. 8, during which he struck out five and didn't issue a walk...

Kyle Cofield made some impressive adjustments after a tough stretch in early July, when he allowed 16 earned runs in 13 2/3 innings over three starts. The righthander won three straight starts while giving up only four earned runs over 25 2/3 innings and four outings from July 19-Aug. 8...

Leftfielder **Willie Cabrera** has done an impressive job to overcome a slow start. Cabrera raised his batting average by more than 25 points by hitting at a .362 clip from July 1-Aug. 9.

MYRTLE BEACH
ADVANCED A

Leftfielder **Chris Shehan** responded to his July 14 promotion from Rome by posting a 10-game hitting streak from July 18-31. Shehan, the 2008 Southern Conference Player of the Year at Georgia Southern prior to being drafted in the 30th round, went 15-for-41 with eight doubles and a home run during the stretch...

Second baseman **Michael Fisher** entered July with a .216 batting average for the season before hitting at a .290 clip during the month with 13 RBIs, which equaled his total from the previous three months. The Georgia Tech product and converted shortstop is becoming more comfortable at second...

Hard-throwing righthander **Michael Broadway** did not allow an earned run in seven straight relief appearances, a span of 12 1/3 innings, from July 20-Aug. 7. Broadway went 1-0 with a 1.35 ERA in 11 games and 20 innings in July and lowered his earned run average for the season from 6.98 to 4.36...

Leftfielder **Cody Johnson** missed a week with an oblique injury prior to returning to the lineup Aug. 6. Johnson, who had a six-game hitting streak just prior to the injury, has ranked among the minor league leaders in home runs all season and had a Myrtle Beach franchise record 26 through Aug. 9...

Infielder **Chad Lundahl** suffered a fractured wrist on Aug. 4 when he was hit by a pitch and was placed on the disabled list. The injury requires 4-6 weeks for full recovery, meaning he will miss the remainder of the season...

Erik Cordier has pitched much better of late, capped by a victory over Lynchburg on Aug. 6 when he allowed two earned runs, eight hits and no walks to improve to 6-4...

TOP 10 CHOPTALK PROSPECTS

1	**JASON HEYWARD** RF, 20, Myrtle Beach
2	**FREDDIE FREEMAN** 1B, 19, Myrtle Beach
3	**JULIO TEHERAN** RHP, 18, Rome
4	**CODY JOHNSON** LF, 20, Myrtle Beach
5	**CRAIG KIMBREL** RHP, 21, Mississippi
6	**RANDALL DELGADO** RHP, 19, Rome
7	**JOSE ORTEGANO** LHP, 22, Mississippi
8	**ZEKE SPRUILL** RHP, 19, Rome
9	**COLE ROHRBOUGH** LHP, 22, Myrtle Beach
10	**MIKE MINOR** LHP, 21, Rome

According to an American League scout in early August, the Pelicans have 10 pitchers that can be considered major league prospects. Myrtle Beach pitching coach **Guy Hansen** agreed.

ROME
CLASS A

Rome received help in the arms race in early August. **Julio Teheran** was promoted from Danville on Aug. 5 after posting a 2.68 ERA in seven starts and emerging as one of the top pitching prospects in the Appalachian League. The 18-year-old righthander from Colombia had a perfect game through 5 2/3 innings and allowed only two hits in eight shutout innings, striking out 11 in a 3-1 win at Burlington on July 30. "He's been a dominant pitcher all season," said D-Braves manager **Paul Runge**. "He has plus command. His stuff's phenomenal. He's becoming a polished pitcher." Teheran had eight strikeouts in his debut with Rome but suffered the loss in his five-inning stint...

The R-Braves also received 2009 first-round draft pick **Mike Minor**, who signed with Atlanta on Aug. 6 as the seventh overall selection. The Vanderbilt product was expected to participate in side work during the early part of his stay at Rome before working his way into a few innings by the end of the season...

Closer **Jaye Chapman** was promoted to Myrtle Beach on July 31 after going 13-for-13 in save opportunities and posting an outstanding 0.40 ERA in 19 games with the R-Braves...

Rome received infielder **Adam Coe** after he concluded his rehabilitation that had kept him off the field for the first four months of the season. Coe was second on the R-Braves with 28 doubles in 2008...

Leftfielder **Adam Milligan** has been a big addition in the middle of the Rome lineup. Milligan opened the season with nine games at Danville in June and hit .439 with two homers and 10 RBIs. In his first 116 at-bats with Rome, through Aug. 9, the Walters State Community College product batted .353 with eight home runs and 20 RBIs...

Rightfielder **Luis Sumoza** rejoined Rome on July 13 after a short stint with Myrtle Beach. Sumoza batted just .189 in nine games with the Pelicans, yet regained his stroke upon returning to the South Atlantic League by hitting .316 in his first six games in August, including a 4-for-4 outing with four RBIs in a 7-3 win over Asheville on Aug. 1...

Hitting coach **Bobby Moore** has been impressed with the progress displayed by **Yoel Campusano**. The 22-year-old second baseman from the Dominican Republic struggled at mid-season after falling into bad habits. With Moore's assistance, Campusano is now striding toward the pitcher and hitting the ball from gap to gap. He is also putting the barrel of the bat on the ball with consistency, which led to his .348 batting average in July and an overall .301 through Aug. 9...

Brett DeVall, who was hampered by a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 48

FARM STATISTICS

GWINNETT 64-41

INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE TRIPLE A | GWINNETT STADIUM (678) 277-0300

BATTER	AVG	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Barton, Brian (OF)	.269	87	286	34	77	14	4	6	37	33	76	9
Blanco, Gregor (OF)	.223	67	256	38	57	7	1	2	24	36	53	8
Boscan, J.C. (C)	.250	13	44	5	11	4	0	0	2	2	9	0
Burke, Chris (SS/2b)	.292	45	168	25	49	14	0	3	20	15	25	8
Canizares, Barbaro (1B)	.300	102	403	47	121	27	2	11	59	36	50	1
Colina, Alvin (C)	.256	53	180	23	46	10	0	5	33	19	49	1
Conrad, Brooks (INF)	.252	88	314	53	79	16	0	10	45	43	85	9
Gorecki, Reid (OF)	.286	99	339	54	97	26	6	8	45	33	69	13
Hernandez, Diory (SS)	.355	29	110	11	39	12	0	0	20	10	10	5
Holt, J.C. (2B/OF)	.282	81	266	44	75	12	3	0	30	27	50	14
Jones, Brandon (OF)	.290	84	293	34	85	20	2	4	39	39	61	4
Kirkland, Kody (INF)	.289	13	38	5	11	2	0	1	2	4	13	1
Perez, Antonio (INF)	.192	45	120	18	23	4	2	1	8	12	21	3
Pope, Van (3B)	.201	91	279	32	56	15	0	4	26	28	49	2
Sammons, Clint (C)	.225	65	240	28	54	12	0	7	33	17	51	5
Timmons, Wes (INF)	.294	80	228	43	67	15	1	0	23	50	24	10

PITCHERS	W-L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	OBA
Acosta, Manny	1-3	2.86	15	0	0	22.0	18	7	7	10	18	.220
Brownlie, Bobby	3-1	3.89	9	4	0	37.0	35	16	16	7	32	.252
Bueno, Francisley	4-1	3.38	26	5	1	48.0	42	19	18	20	28	.237
Gamble, Jerome	1-3	5.60	6	4	0	17.2	25	24	11	13	17	.329
Gomez, Mariano	7-4	1.97	38	0	7	64.0	44	16	14	26	33	.199
Halama, John	3-4	4.62	11	8	0	62.1	63	33	32	25	35	.272
Heath, Deunte	0-0	10.03	4	2	0	11.2	16	14	13	11	9	.314
Huber, Jon	2-0	5.70	19	0	0	30.0	34	19	19	6	24	.283
Lyman, Jeff	0-2	7.71	2	2	0	7.0	9	6	6	8	7	.290
Nunez, Vladimir	2-2	1.88	33	2	3	67.0	52	16	14	31	66	.216
Parr, James	1-1	5.40	7	6	0	30.0	34	18	18	5	20	.286
Perez, Juan	2-3	2.47	38	0	1	43.2	30	18	12	27	43	.189
Redmond, Todd	7-6	4.31	22	19	0	117.0	130	70	56	36	91	.278
Reyes, Jo-Jo	2-1	3.03	9	8	0	32.2	30	12	11	13	13	.248
Valdez, Luis	4-3	2.58	46	0	21	59.1	50	28	17	16	57	.222
Venters, Jonny	2-5	6.14	11	11	0	58.2	71	44	40	26	39	.298

MISSISSIPPI 53-60

SOUTHERN LEAGUE DOUBLE A | TRUSTMARK PARK (601) 664-7600

BATTER	AVG	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Boscan, J.C. (C)	.268	70	239	19	64	12	0	0	30	32	49	2
Britton, Phillip (C)	.224	36	116	9	26	9	0	0	12	5	23	1
Cabrera, Willie (OF)	.271	84	303	37	82	16	2	5	44	27	43	1
Camarena, Jose (C)	.172	21	58	1	10	3	0	0	2	4	8	1
Campbell, Eric (3B)	.246	99	349	27	86	16	1	4	37	36	50	1
Creek, Greg (1B)	.239	84	255	21	61	9	1	5	33	21	56	1
Freeman, Freddie (1B)	.264	31	110	13	29	8	0	2	22	9	12	0
Guzman, Javier (2B)	.087	12	23	3	2	0	0	0	0	1	4	0
Heyward, Jason (OF)	.411	31	107	25	44	12	2	6	23	17	12	1
Hicks, Brandon (SS)	.223	103	372	46	83	17	3	5	31	39	110	11
Jones, Travis (2B)	.234	97	299	33	70	14	1	5	35	41	77	17
Kirkland, Kody (INF)	.176	69	188	27	33	7	3	3	16	14	45	3
Marcial, Robert (INF)	.077	4	13	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	7	1
Perez, Antonio (2B)	.333	3	12	3	4	0	0	1	1	0	3	0
Rodriguez, Concepcion (OF)	.273	97	319	33	87	11	1	2	25	25	53	7
Young, Matt (OF)	.284	111	395	66	112	19	7	3	28	75	53	29

PITCHERS	W-L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	OBA
Butts, Brett	6-2	3.12	44	0	4	57.2	57	22	20	32	58	.264
Cofield, Kyle	8-3	3.43	21	19	0	118.0	97	50	45	70	73	.227
Cruz, Rafael	0-2	4.76	22	0	12	22.2	27	13	12	8	20	.290
Diamond, Scott	5-10	3.57	21	21	0	118.1	139	63	47	47	101	.296
Dumesnil, Bryan	1-7	4.41	38	0	2	49.0	46	28	24	28	55	.250
Gamble, Jerome	1-1	3.21	28	1	3	42.0	32	20	15	24	42	.211
Gearrin, Cory	1--2	3.18	18	0	2	22.2	19	9	8	8	17	.235
Gunderson, Kevin	1-2	2.79	36	0	2	38.2	36	12	12	16	32	.252
Gustafson, Tim	1-1	4.35	15	2	1	31.0	28	15	15	17	31	.241
Heath, Deunte	2-5	4.50	21	11	1	72.0	74	42	36	38	63	.265
Lyman, Jeff	5-7	3.16	27	8	0	77.0	62	32	27	35	63	.218
Marek, Stephen	3-3	5.83	29	0	1	29.1	29	22	19	25	23	.266
Ortegano, Jose	3-0	0.90	3	3	0	20.0	17	3	2	3	21	.230
Osuna, Edgar	3-3	4.26	11	10	0	63.1	60	35	30	20	37	.248
Reynoso, Ryne	6-7	3.19	21	20	0	124.0	103	52	44	48	77	.227
Venters, Jonny	4-4	2.76	12	12	0	65.1	60	24	20	35	483	.250

MYRTLE BEACH 44-65

CAROLINA LEAGUE ADVANCED A | BB&T COASTAL FIELD (843) 918-6002

BATTER	AVG	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Davis, Quentin (OF)	.227	17	66	8	15	2	2	0	3	4	11	1
Fisher, Michael (2B)	.240	90	338	38	81	13	0	2	26	26	78	4
Gress, Randy (INF)	.179	37	117	10	21	5	0	2	10	10	30	1
Johnson, Benji (C)	.222	57	189	17	42	9	0	7	29	18	58	2
Johnson, Cody (OF)	.256	100	355	49	91	18	1	26	76	52	134	10
Kennelly, Mathew (C)	.195	47	159	13	31	4	0	1	6	14	44	0
Lee, C.J. (OF)	.254	74	244	36	62	14	3	3	15	18	70	6
Linares, Donell (3B)	.281	102	399	48	112	26	1	8	61	15	35	4
Lundahl, Chad (INF)	.157	60	204	15	32	8	0	2	12	6	34	1
Marcial, Robert (INF)	.202	61	198	20	40	3	0	3	16	10	48	6
Mejia, Ernesto (1B)	.294	10	34	4	10	5	0	0	6	4	9	0
Miles, Cole (OF/2B)	.271	94	332	53	90	5	5	4	23	37	50	14
Owings, Jon (OF)	.208	42	144	11	30	5	3	2	12	11	45	2
Rodriguez, Gerardo (1B)	.308	34	133	21	41	6	2	5	25	10	42	1
Shehan, Chris (OF)	.295	20	78	9	23	10	0	1	3	2	21	1
Sucre, Jesus (C)	.233	31	120	9	28	4	1	2	9	6	20	1

PITCHERS	W-L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	OBA
Beachy, Brandon	2-2	2.72	16	4	1	36.1	36	18	11	8	32	.257
Broadway, Michael	2-7	4.36	32	1	0	53.2	54	29	26	31	47	.265
Chapman, Jaye	0-0	4.74	17	0	0	19.0	17	11	10	11	22	.239
Cordier, Erik	6-4	3.38	19	19	0	90.2	87	43	34	52	61	.257
Gearrin, Cory	0-0	0.93	18	0	12	19.1	12	2	2	1	21	.169
Hyde, Lee	2-1	1.42	14	0	1	19.0	13	4	3	8	24	.186
Kimbrel, Craig	0-2	5.47	19	0	2	26.1	18	19	16	28	45	.200
Locke, Jeff	1-4	5.52	10	10	0	45.2	47	31	28	26	43	.272
Ortegano, Jose	4-5	3.49	21	12	0	69.2	56	30	27	19	59	.220
Osuna, Edgar	3-4	3.19	10	10	0	53.2	52	23	19	11	37	.246
Palica, Thomas	5-1	2.63	33	0	6	41.0	36	17	12	17	42	.237
Pruneda, Benino	1-2	3.54	28	0	3	40.2	36	20	16	25	53	.240
Rohrbough, Cole	4--7	6.04	18	17	0	89.1	103	63	60	40	76	.293
Sullivan, Richard	2--10	4.00	15	15	0	90.0	85	53	40	32	69	.245
Thompson, Jacob	5-3	3.88	11	9	0	65.0	61	30	28	30	55	.254
Wilson, Tyler	0-2	4.58	15	0	0	17.2	12	11	9	14	15	.190

ROME 53-58

SOUTH ATLANTIC LEAGUE CLASS A | STATE MUTUAL STADIUM (706) 368-9388

BATTER	AVG	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Barba, Ryan (SS)	.204	94	299	32	61	17	0	2	24	24	57	4
Campusano, Yoel (2B)	.301	79	306	44	92	12	4	5	29	16	39	9
Culver, Calvin (OF)	.249	62	229	20	57	16	0	3	18	14	39	2
Kennelly, Mathew (C)	.264	30	106	10	28	6	0	1	9	9	22	1
Lee, C.J. (OF)	.239	14	46	4	11	2	0	0	5	3	11	1
Maddox, Craig (DH)	.231	11	39	2	9	0	0	0	1	1	15	1
Milligan, Adam (OF)	.353	32	116	15	41	8	1	8	20	7	25	1
Moody, Shayne (3B/2B)	.262	58	206	26	54	6	0	0	22	17	28	6
Rodriguez, Gerardo (1B)	.258	63	240	29	62	9	5	11	42	12	69	4
Santamaria, Jahdiel (OF)	.274	62	212	26	58	8	2	0	14	12	37	5
Schlehuber, Braeden (C)	.213	86	296	38	63	22	0	5	34	17	55	5
Shehan, Chris (OF)	.248	66	214	32	53	9	2	2	19	17	53	6
Shults, Stephen (1B/3B/OF)	.218	60	206	22	45	15	0	4	18	13	63	2
Sime, Samuel (3B/SS)	.253	84	288	40	73	13	4	2	20	17	61	8
Sucre, Jesus (C)	.325	45	169	14	55	15	0	1	18	6	17	1
Sumoza, Luis (OF)	.268	92	351	38	94	23	2	2	32	23	70	5

PITCHERS	W-L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	OBA
Castro, Yeliar	4-3	4.83	27	1	1	54.0	51	33	29	27	61	.254
Chapman, Jaye	1-0	0.40	19	0	13	22.2	9	3	1	4	29	.113
Clemens, Paul	6-5	5.57	24	11	3	84.0	100	60	52	43	63	.288
Delgado, Dimaster	3-5	3.80	12	12	0	68.2	62	31	29	15	76	.239
Delgado, Randall	4-8	4.41	20	20	0	102.0	98	58	50	45	112	.253
DeVall, Brett	4-4	3.52	10	10	0	53.2	50	22	21	14	41	.245
Francis, David	3-7	3.63	22	6	1	74.1	84	37	30	25	63	.289
Harris, Tyrelle	2-0	0.77	9	0	0	11.2	5	1	1	5	15	.132
Hoover, J.J.	4-5	3.53	20	14	1	102.0	108	48	40	17	115	.265
Kimbrel, Craig	0-0	0.90	16	0	10	20.0	9	2	2	6	38	.132
McMillan, Clayton	1-1	3.00	29	0	0	30.0	36	16	10	10	26	.303
Paulino, Angelo	5-4	3.08	30	0	1	49.2	42	21	17	24	63	.221
Small, Matthew	1-2	4.87	15	0	1	20.1	16	11	11	7	21	.216
Spruill, Zeke	8-5	3.06	18	17	1	106.0	109	50	36	21	85	.260
Sullivan, Richard	4-1	3.72	5	5	0	29.0	37	18	12	5	27	.250
Thompson, Jacob	2-5	5.20	11	11	0	64.0	74	41	37	14	41	.259

DANVILLE 31-15

APPALACHIAN LEAGUE
ROOKIE ADVANCED

LEGION FIELD
(434) 797-3792

BATTER	AVG	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Adair, Travis (2B)	.200	28	85	11	17	2	1	0	11	11	11	3
Elorriaga-Matra, Daniel (C)	.116	30	86	6	10	7	0	0	5	4	27	0
Gress, Randy (INF)	.324	10	37	7	12	3	1	0	8	2	7	0
Harrilchak, Cory (OF)	.364	40	154	32	56	7	4	2	31	17	13	12
Hefflinger, Robert (OF)	.241	41	162	13	39	7	1	6	32	13	50	1
Jones, Mycal (SS)	.273	44	165	41	45	13	4	4	21	19	42	11
Kreke, Jordan (3B)	.260	43	154	24	40	7	1	2	10	17	26	1
Marval, Osman (C)	.196	20	56	5	11	4	0	0	9	7	5	0
Miles, Kuyaunnis (OF)	.189	28	74	10	14	2	1	2	6	4	30	1
Milligan, Adam (OF)	.439	9	41	9	18	5	1	2	10	3	7	0
Rauh, Bobby (OF)	.256	15	43	7	11	4	0	0	1	1	15	4
Spanjer-Furstenburg, Riaan (1B)	.383	40	154	26	59	12	0	7	39	10	26	0
Ware, L.V. (OF)	.320	43	181	28	58	13	5	0	20	6	27	17
Weaver, Matthew (2B)	.262	15	42	3	11	4	0	0	2	3	8	1
Whitmer, Jace (C)	.253	24	91	8	23	4	0	0	5	4	28	1
Wiley, Derek (1B)	.203	21	59	9	12	2	0	2	3	2	16	0

PITCHERS	W-L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	OBA
Accomando, Dennis	0-0	9.39	6	0	0	7.2	10	9	8	5	3	.294
Avilan, Luis	0-2	3.46	8	3	1	26.0	19	10	10	10	20	.204
Berryhill, Thomas	1-1	3.07	14	0	6	14.2	14	5	5	9	10	.259
Bullard, Adam	0-1	5.00	4	0	0	9.0	8	7	5	5	7	.250
Crim, Matthew	8-0	3.06	9	7	0	50.0	55	19	17	7	37	.274
Harris, Tyrelle	0-0	1.59	3	0	1	5.2	5	1	1	0	9	.227
Himpsl, Derick	3-0	5.25	8	0	0	12.0	8	8	7	14	19	.178
Hodges, Casey	1-0	2.93	9	0	4	15.1	14	7	5	8	12	.226
Lorick, Jeffrey	2-1	4.97	11	3	2	25.1	23	16	14	10	30	.237
Masters, Christopher	4-4	1.93	9	7	0	46.2	37	15	10	4	56	.214
Oberholtzer, Brett	3-1	1.60	8	8	0	45.0	29	10	8	5	37	.180
Railsback, Cody	1-0	1.93	8	0	1	9.1	5	2	2	5	8	.147
Rasmus, Cory	1-2	4.06	9	2	1	31.0	26	15	14	16	34	.232
Stovall, Tyler	2-1	3.82	9	9	0	37.2	30	17	16	42	47	.229
Surinach, Julio	2-1	1.91	10	0	3	28.1	21	6	6	9	22	.214
Teheran, Julio	2-1	2.68	7	7	0	43.2	36	17	13	7	39	.229

GULF COAST 18-23

GULF COAST LEAGUE
ROOKIE

CHAMPION STADIUM AT DISNEY
(407) 939-2301

BATTER	AVG	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Bethancourt, Christian (C)	.299	29	107	22	32	9	1	2	18	9	21	7
Blanco, Elys (2B)	.220	24	59	12	13	1	0	0	2	8	18	4
Contreras, Luis (OF)	.171	27	41	6	7	1	0	0	1	7	11	2
Dalfonso, Jakob (3B)	.301	27	93	15	28	5	0	0	17	10	12	4
De Los Santos, Fernando (SS/2B)	.191	24	68	11	13	1	2	1	8	5	16	1
Falcon, Daniel (OF)	.296	32	98	11	29	5	2	2	13	6	27	1
Feliz, Anthony (OF)	.287	35	108	18	31	9	1	2	7	4	15	2
Hanson, Jake (3B)	.274	28	73	13	20	5	1	2	10	12	20	2
Hiller, Layton (OF)	.295	35	129	17	38	14	0	6	34	2	43	1
Kramer, Matt (1B)	.233	21	43	8	10	0	0	3	9	1	9	0
Linger, Jim (2B)	.260	25	77	9	20	3	1	0	4	5	7	2
Lovett, Christopher (SS)	.210	27	81	11	17	6	1	1	9	10	11	2
Mejia, Ernesto (1B)	.214	10	28	3	6	1	0	1	3	3	5	0
Odreman, Alberto (1B)	.238	36	126	17	30	1	1	6	22	4	33	1
Payne, Mike (C)	.286	11	21	3	6	1	0	0	2	0	4	0
Rose, Kyle (OF)	.291	35	103	19	30	3	1	1	7	15	12	19

PITCHERS	W-L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	OBA
Alvarez, Danilo	1-1	3.86	8	0	1	11.2	9	5	5	0	11	.214
Brewer, Caleb	2-1	2.48	8	6	0	29.0	11	8	8	25	41	.116
Escobar, Reidy	1-1	5.40	7	0	0	11.2	14	8	7	4	11	.292
Estevez, Wilton	0-2	4.24	9	0	2	17.0	12	8	8	8	21	.194
Farrell, Kyle	0-3	8.20	8	3	0	26.1	33	31	24	16	19	.303
Hernandez, Moises	2-1	3.07	9	2	0	14.2	17	6	5	5	13	.293
Huang, Wei	1-1	3.48	8	0	0	10.1	9	4	4	5	5	.231
La Point, Lucas	0-4	5.06	7	3	0	16.0	18	13	9	12	13	.281
Lopez, Robinson	1-0	1.37	7	4	0	26.1	22	6	4	9	23	.229
Mora, Edigson	2-0	0.95	7	0	2	19.0	6	2	2	2	17	.098
Niekro, Lance	1-3	5.33	9	4	0	27.0	27	29	16	13	17	.262
Northcraft, Aaron	1-1	4.10	7	6	0	26.1	23	18	12	15	23	.235
Pacheco, Ronan	1-1	3.08	8	4	0	26.1	24	12	9	9	24	.235
Perez, Carlos	0-1	5.32	7	4	0	22.0	27	18	13	10	19	.307
Spruill, Zeke	1-0	3.38	2	2	0	10.2	11	5	4	1	14	.262
Wilson, Andrew	2-2	3.75	8	0	0	12.0	10	5	5	4	15	.213

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 46

forearm strain last season that led to his being held back in spring training, is not expected to pitch again this season. DeVall went on the disabled list after suffering an elbow injury in late June. No decision has been announced about whether he'll undergo surgery.

DANVILLE
ROOKIE ADVANCED

Tyler Stovall, Atlanta's second-round draft pick in 2008, has been dominating when he has been able to get the ball over the plate. The left-handed pitcher issued six walks three times in a five-start stretch, from July 17-Aug. 8, yet still managed to go 1-1 during that span. Through 37 2/3 innings, Stovall had 47 strikeouts but had issued 42 walks...

The Braves are receiving their first extended activity from **Cory Rasmus**, a supplemental first-round draft pick in 2006. The right-handed pitcher threw seven innings shortly after signing before missing all of 2007 and most of 2008 due to surgery that tightened the muscles in his throwing shoulder. Rasmus worked out of the bullpen in his first six appearances this year before piggybacking in the rotation and going 1-2 with a 4.06 ERA in his first eight games. The younger brother of St. Louis rookie **Colby Rasmus**, he had 34 strikeouts in 31 innings, and five of his 16 earned runs came in a single outing...

Catcher **Daniel Elorriaga-Matra** picked off two Bristol runners to help secure a 2-1 victory on Aug. 2...

In late July and early August, D-Braves starters posted a 1.35 ERA in a seven-game span. The entire Danville staff allowed just three earned runs over the last five games of that stretch...

Lefthander **Luis Avilan** was named the Appalachian League Pitcher of the Week for July 13-19. The 6-foot-2 Venezuelan tossed three shutout innings versus Elizabethton on July 15, allowing no hits while striking out two, before throwing four scoreless innings against Bristol on July 19 and giving up only one hit and a walk.

GULF COAST
ROOKIE

Lance Niekro won his Braves pitching debut on June 25 but lost his last three decisions despite making steady progress in his conversion from a first baseman to a knuckleball pitcher. Niekro threw a six-inning complete game during a doubleheader with the Pirates on July 21, allowing one hit, three walks, a hit batsman as well as three unearned runs to suffer the setback. Even so, the son of former Brave Joe Niekro and the nephew of Hall of Famer Phil Niekro has made strides with his command and overall feel for pitching...

Leftfielder **Layton Hiller** ranks among the GCL leaders in home runs, RBIs and slugging percentage. Drafted in the 15th round in 2008 out of Blinn (Texas) Junior College, Hiller led the league in July with five homers and tied for the top spot with 21 RBIs...

Centerfielder **Kyle Rose** is proving he can be a disruptive hitter with his above-average speed. The eighth-round pick this June out of Northwest Shoals (Ala.) Community College is among the GCL leaders in stolen bases, including 15 in 17 tries during July, when he also batted .319. Rose owned a .407 on-base percentage through Aug. 9...

Caleb Brewer is a classic example of a raw pitcher with some impressive upside at the rookie league level. The righthander from Hamilton, Ga., recorded 41 strikeouts and allowed only 11 hits in his first 29 innings. Batters were hitting just .116 against him. At the same time, Brewer walked 25.

TICKETING

TO PURCHASE TICKETS OR FOR TICKET INFORMATION, CALL (404) 577-9100 OR VISIT braves.com

INDIVIDUAL GAME TICKETS

Single game tickets are available at braves.com/tickets, the Braves box office at Turner Field, by calling 1-800-326-4000, and at all TicketMaster outlets.

LOCATION	PRICE	PREMIUM#	SEASON+
Skyline@	$1	$1	NA
Upper Pavilion	$6	$6	$3
Upper Reserved	$8	$12	NA
Upper Box	$12	$16	$10
Field/Terrace Pavilion	$22	$26	$12
Terrace Reserved	$24	$28	$22
Field Reserved	$26	$30	$24
Club Pavilion	$28	$32	$26
Terrace Level	$36	$40	$30
Field Level	$36	$40	$30
Club Level	$38	$42	$34
Dugout Level	$60	$64	$52
Henry Aaron Seats	$70	$74	$60

All Friday and Saturday regular season games.
+ Season ticket price per game.
@ Available 3 hours before game at Turner Field box office.

GROUP TICKETS

Per ticket discounts are available to groups of 20 or more. Call (404) 577-9100 for information.

FLEX PLANS

Priced as low as $99 (9 games/upper box location). Pick as few as 9 games and save up to $6 per ticket. Exchange tickets up to 24 hours prior to start of any game in your plan.

Location	Regular/Premium	Flex Price
Golden Moon Casino	$38/$42	$37
Terrace	$36/$40	$35
Field Level	$36/$40	$35
Field/Terrace Pavilion	$22/$26	$21
Upper Box	$12/$16	$11

TICKET SPECIALS

* $1 Skyline Seats – Available three hours before every game at the Turner Field Box Office.
* Chevron Family Value Plan - 4 tickets, 4 hotdogs, 4 Cokes, a Braves yearbook, a parking pass and a $5 gas card for as low as $59 (37 percent savings), available Sunday through Thursday (Friday/Saturday games are an extra $20 per pack; seats are Upper Box; upgrade available for additional charge).
* Coca-Cola Two-For-One Tuesdays – Two Upper Reserved tickets for the price of one every Tuesday.
* Two-For-One Wednesdays – Two Field/Terrace Pavilion tickets for the price of one every Wednesday.
* ampm All You Can Eat Seats – For as low as $45, enjoy all the peanuts and crackerjacks, hotdogs, hamburgers, sodas, and more, for one low all-inclusive price.
* College, Military, and AAA Discount – Two Upper Box tickets for the price of one with a valid college or military ID or valid AAA member card (excluding June 23-28).
* Ultimate Kids Days – Tickets for all fans 14 and under are $5 on Sunday, Aug. 2. Young fans can also participate in pre-game parades around the field and be eligible to win several special experiences, including serving at the team's Honorary Team Captain or Guest Public Address Announcer.
* Publix Friday Night Fireworks (every Friday home game).
* All-Star Sundays (every Sunday home game): Kids run the bases, and Braves alumni autograph signings.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU

The Braves are offering all fans a birthday present - a free ticket to a game at Turner Field. Fans can go to braves.com/birthday to register for their free ticket to a game. See the following chart for the month in which you qualify for a ticket.

BIRTH MONTH	FREE TICKET
April or October	April, May, October
May or November	May
June or December	June
July or January	July
August or February	August
September or March	September

2009 SCHEDULE

FS SOUTH — FSS

Peachtree TV — PTV

SPORTSOUTH — SPSO

ALL GAMES ON WGST-AM (640), 96.1-FM, AND BRAVES RADIO NETWORK AFFILIATES

AUG./SEPT.

Braves — HOME — AWAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
30 1:30 PM FSS PHI	31 7:00 PM SPSO FLA	1 7:00 PM SPSO FLA	2 7:00 PM SPSO FLA	3 7:00 PM SPSO FLA	4 7:30 PM SPSO CIN	5 7:00 PM SPSO CIN
6 1:30 PM FSS CIN	7	8 8:00 PM SPSO HOU	9 8:00 PM SPSO HOU	10 8:00 PM SPSO HOU	11 8:00 PM SPSO STL	12 4:00 PM FOX STL
13 2:00 PM FSS STL	14	15 7:00 PM PTV NYM	16 7:00 PM PTV NYM	17 7:00 PM SPSO NYM	18 7:30 PM PTV PHI	19 7:00 PM PTV PHI
20 1:30 PM FSS PHI	21 7:00 PM SPSO NYM	22 7:00 PM SPSO NYM	23 7:00 PM NYM	24	25 7:00 PM SPSO WAS	26 1:00 PM SPSO WAS
27 1:30 PM FSS WAS	28 7:00 PM SPSO FLA	29 7:00 PM SPSO FLA	30 7:00 PM SPSO FLA			

Post-Season Dates Are Tentative, Unofficial and Subject To Change.

OCT./NOV.

National League Division Series — National League Championship Series — World Series

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1 7:00 PM SPSO WAS	2 7:30 PM SPSO WAS	3 7:00 PM SPSO WAS
4 1:30 PM FSS WAS	5	6	7 NLDS	8 NLDS	9 NLDS	10 NLDS
11 NLDS	12 NLDS	13 NLCS	14	15 NLCS	16 NLCS	17 NLCS
18 NLCS	19 NLCS	20 NLCS	21 NLCS	22 NLCS	23 NLCS	24 NLCS
25	26	27	28 AL Home Game FOX WS	29 AL Home Game FOX WS	30	31 NL Home Game FOX WS
1 NL Home Game FOX WS	2 NL Home Game FOX WS*	3	4 AL Home Game FOX WS*	5 AL Home Game FOX WS*		

* If necessary

World Series home field advantage (Games 1, 2, 6 and 7) is awarded to the team representing the league that won the All-Star Game.

ROSTER As of Aug. 11

PITCHERS (12 Active)
- 46 Manny Acosta
- **57 Jorge Campillo
- 51 Mike Gonzalez
- 48 Tommy Hanson
- **15 Tim Hudson
- 49 Jair Jurrjens
- 11 Kenshin Kawakami
- 36 Boone Logan
- 32 Derek Lowe
- 54 Kris Medlen
- 58 Peter Moylan
- 34 Eric O'Flaherty
- 39 Rafael Soriano
- 33 Javier Vazquez

CATCHERS (2)
- 16 Brian McCann
- 8 David Ross

INFIELDERS (7)
- 19 Yunel Escobar
- 4 Omar Infante
- 2 Kelly Johnson
- 10 Chipper Jones
- 22 Adam LaRoche
- 20 Greg Norton
- 14 Martin Prado

OUTFIELDERS (4)
- 18 Garret Anderson
- 25 Ryan Church
- 23 Matt Diaz
- 13 Nate McLouth

** 60-Day Disabled List

Braves INDIVIDUAL STATS

THROUGH 8/10/09

BATTERS	AVG	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	TB	BB	SO	SB	CS	OBP	SLG	E
INFANTE	.349	29	86	13	30	4	0	1	11	37	6	7	1	0	.389	.430	2
PRADO	.312	86	285	38	89	22	0	7	35	132	25	32	0	3	.365	.463	4
ESCOBAR	.306	94	359	55	110	21	1	11	59	166	32	40	3	3	.373	.462	12
JONES	.292	97	334	56	98	19	2	14	52	163	68	53	3	1	.409	.488	14
RIGHT	.304		115		35	9	1	8	29	70	16	20			.383	.609	
LEFT	.288		219		63	10	1	6	23	93	52	33			.422	.425	
DIAZ	.292	81	219	34	64	11	3	6	31	99	18	50	6	2	.355	.452	1
McCANN	.287	92	324	40	93	28	1	12	55	159	36	52	3	1	.361	.491	6
ANDERSON	.284	90	324	32	92	19	0	9	44	138	17	51	1	0	.314	.426	3
CHURCH	.280	86	286	38	80	19	0	4	31	111	28	45	6	2	.346	.388	2
ATL	.278	19	54	12	15	3	0	2	9	24	11	9	0	0	.400	.444	1
ROSS	.273	39	99	14	27	6	0	6	15	51	16	34	0	0	.374	.515	1
MCLOUTH	.258	99	388	65	100	22	2	15	56	171	48	74	17	2	.345	.441	1
ATL	.259	54	220	38	57	15	1	6	22	92	27	45	10	2	.343	.418	1
LAROCHE	.256	96	356	51	91	26	1	13	44	158	47	91	2	2	.339	.444	1
ATL	.344	9	32	5	11	1	0	1	4	15	6	10	0	0	.436	.469	0
AL	.263	6	19	2	5	2	0	1	3	10	0	2	0	0	.263	.526	0
JOHNSON	.227	79	260	41	59	17	3	8	26	106	25	45	5	2	.301	.408	7
HERNANDEZ	.141	33	85	6	12	3	0	1	6	18	6	22	0	1	.198	.212	1
NORTON	.138	67	58	2	8	2	0	0	5	10	11	15	0	0	.286	.172	0
RIGHT	.333		12		4	1	0	0	3	5	2	3			.429	.417	
LEFT	.087		46		4	1	0	0	2	5	9	12			.250	.109	
ATLANTA	.265	112	3,833	497	1,015	217	16	99	476	1,561	402	705	41	18	.336	.407	66
OPPONENTS	.252	112	3,771	460	952	200	35	77	442	1,453	383	829	71	34	.325	.385	55

PINCH-HITTERS (AVG-H-HR-RBI) **Church**, Atl. (1.000-1-1-2), **Johnson** (.500-4-0-1), **Jones** (.500-2-0-2), **Escobar** (.500-1-0-1), **Prado** (.400-4-0-3), **Infante** (.400-2-0-1), **McCann** (.375-3-0-1), **Diaz** (.286-4-0-0), **Anderson** (.273-3-1-4), **Norton** (.160-8-0-5), **Hernandez** (.000-0-0-0), **Ross** (.000-0-0-0), **Kawakami** (.000-0-0-0). **TEAM** (.259-35-3-23).

PITCHERS (AVG-H-HR-RBI) **Lowe** (.184-7-0-1), **Vazquez** (.156-70-2), **Jurrjens** (.152-7-0-4), **Kawakami** (.125-4-0-0), **Hanson** (.095-2-0-1), **Acosta** (.000-0-0-0), **Moylan** (.000-0-0-0), **Medlen** (.000-0-0-0). **STAFF** (.137-27-0-8).

KEY

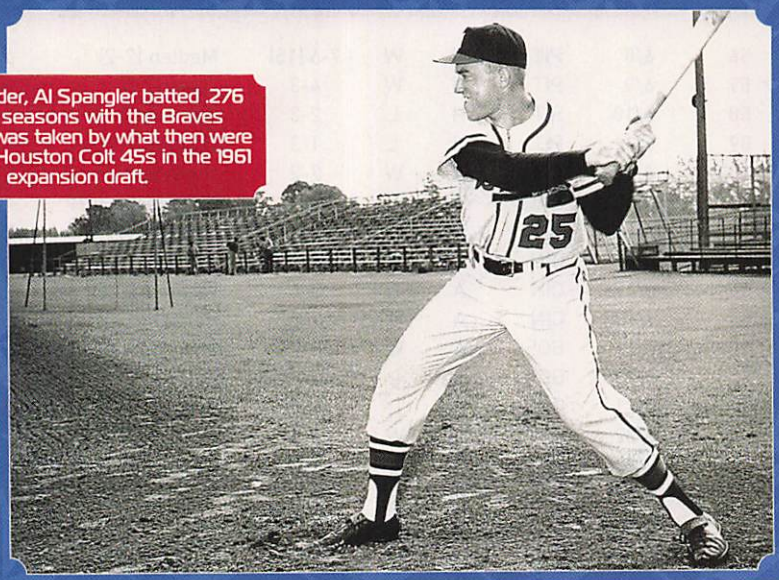
AVG-Batting average, SLG-Slugging percentage, OBP-On-base percentage, G-Games, AB-At-bats, R-Runs, H-Hits, 2B-Doubles, 3B-Triples, HR-Home runs, RBI-Runs batted in, TB-Total bases, BB-Walks, SO-Strikeouts, SB-Stolen bases, CS-Caught stealing, E-Errors, W-L-Wins-Losses, ERA-Earned run average, GS-Starts, GF-Games finished, SV-Saves, IP-Innings pitched, HB-Hit batters, WP-Wild pitches, OBA-Opponents' batting average.

PITCHERS	W-L	ERA	G	GS	GF	SV	IP	H	R	ER	HR	HB	BB	SO	WP	OBA
SORIANO	1-3	2.42	52	0	31	17	52	32	14	14	3	1	18	69	0	.175
GONZALEZ	3-3	2.77	56	0	23	9	52	41	22	16	4	6	21	69	3	.218
VAZQUEZ	10-7	2.90	23	23	0	0	155.1	129	53	50	13	2	32	171	4	.225
JURRJENS	9-8	3.01	24	24	0	0	143.1	130	55	48	10	2	53	103	2	.247
HANSON	6-2	3.22	11	11	0	0	67	60	25	24	7	3	29	46	1	.243
MOYLAN	4-2	3.40	63	0	5	0	50.1	46	24	19	0	2	24	42	1	.251
O'FLAHERTY	1-1	3.65	56	0	4	0	37	34	17	15	1	4	12	25	1	.243
ACOSTA	1-0	3.81	27	0	14	0	28.1	32	13	12	2	1	14	21	2	.288
LOGAN	1-0	4.09	12	0	3	0	11	9	6	5	0	0	7	4	0	.225
KAWAKAMI	5-9	4.12	21	21	0	0	118	112	60	54	14	5	49	84	6	.252
LOWE	11-7	4.15	24	24	0	0	143	155	70	66	8	3	45	74	3	.279
CAMPILLO	1-0	4.15	5	0	4	0	4.1	7	3	2	0	0	3	3	0	.389
MEDLEN	3-3	4.50	20	4	7	0	46	43	23	23	4	2	22	48	2	.251
ATLANTA	58-54	3.73	112	112	111	26	1,005	952	460	416	77	37	383	829	28	.252
OPPONENTS	54-58	4.03	112	112	109	25	1,006	1,015	497	450	99	29	402	705	26	.265

BY GAME

GAME	DATE	OPP	H/A	W-L	SCORE	W/L PITCHER	ATL HRs	REC	POS	GB
1	4/5	PHI	A	W	4-1	Lowe (1-0)	McCann (1), Francoeur (1), Schafer (1)	1-0	1	+1/2
2	4/7	PHI	A	W	4-0	Jurrjens (1-0)	Johnson (1), Jones (1)	2-0	T-1	—
3	4/8	PHI	A	L	11-12	Boyer (0-1)	McCann (2), Schafer (2), Diaz (1)	2-1	3	-1
4	4/10	WAS	H	W	6-5 (10)	Campillo (1-0)	Escobar (1)	3-1	2	-1
5	4/11	WAS	H	W	5-3	Kawakami (1-0)	Johnson (2)	4-1	T-1	—
6	4/12	WAS	H	W	8-5	Jurrjens (2-0)	—	5-1	T-1	—
7	4/14	FLA	H	L	1-5	Vazquez (0-1)	Johnson (3)	5-2	2	-1
8	4/15	FLA	H	L	4-10	Moylan (0-1)	--	5-3	2	-2
9	4/16	FLA	H	L	2-6	Kawakami (1-1)	--	5-4	2	-3
10	4/17	PIT	A	L	0-3	Jurrjens (2-1)	--	5-5	T-2	-4
11	4/18	PIT	A	L	0-10	Reyes (0-1)	--	5-6	3	-5
12	4/19	PIT	A	W	11-1	Vazquez (1-1)	Prado (1), Ross (1)	6-6	T-2	-5
13	4/20	WAS	A	L	2-3	Lowe (1-1)	Diaz (2)	6-7	3	-5
14	4/21	WAS	A	L	3-4	Kawakami (1-2)	--	6-8	4	-5
15	4/22	WAS	A	W	1-0	Gonzalez (1-0)	--	7-8	2	-4
16	4/24	CIN	A	W	4-3	Vazquez (2-1)	Francoeur (2)	8-8	2	-3
17	4/25	CIN	A	W	10-2	Lowe (2-1)	Jones (2), Escobar (2)	9-8	2	-2
18	4/26	CIN	A	L	2-8	Kawakami (1-3)	Ross (2)	9-9	3	-2
19	4/27	STL	H	L	2-3	Jurrjens (2-2)	--	9-10	T-3	-2
20	4/28	STL	H	W	2-1	Moylan (1-1)	--	10-10	3	-2
21	4/29	STL	H	L	3-5	Vazquez (2-2)	--	10-11	3	-3
22	5/1	HOU	H	W	7-2	Lowe (3-1)	Francoeur (3)	11-11	3	-2 1/2
23	5/2	HOU	H	L	1-5	Carlyle (0-1)	--	11-12	3	-2 1/2
24	5/3	HOU	H	L	5-7	Moylan (1-2)	--	11-13	3	-2 1/2
25	5/4	NYM	H	L	4-6	Vazquez (2-3)	Jones (3)	11-14	4	-3 1/2
26	5/5	NYM	H	L	3-4	Kawakami (1-4)	--	11-15	4	-4
27	5/6	FLA	A	W	8-6	Lowe (4-1)	--	12-15	4	-3
28	5/7	FLA	A	W	4-2	Jurrjens (3-2)	Ross (3), Kotchman (1)	13-15	4	-2
29	5/8	PHI	A	L	6-10	Reyes (0-2)	Infante (1), Kotchman (2)	13-16	4	-3
30	5/9	PHI	A	W	6-2	Vazquez (3-3)	Escobar (3), McCann (3)	14-16	4	-2 1/2
31	5/10	PHI	A	W	4-2	Kawakami (2-4)	--	15-16	4	-2 1/2
32	5/11	NYM	A	W	8-3	Lowe (5-1)	--	16-16	4	-1 1/2
33	5/12	NYM	A	L	3-4 (10)	Bennett (0-1)	--	16-17	4	-2 1/2
34	5/13	NYM	A	W	8-7 (12)	Bennett (1-1)	Prado (2)	17-17	4	-1 1/2
35	5/15	ARZ	H	W	4-3	Gonzalez (2-0)	Jones (4)	18-17	3	-2
36	5/16	ARZ	H	L	0-12	Kawakami (2-5)	--	18-18	3	-3
37	5/18	COL	H	L	1-5	Lowe (5-2)	--	18-19	3	-2 1/2
38	5/19	COL	H	W	8-1	Jurrjens (4-2)	--	19-19	3	-2 1/2
39	5/20	COL	H	W	12-4	Vazquez (4-3)	Escobar (4)	20-19	3	-1 1/2
40	5/21	COL	H	L	0-9	Medlen (0-1)	--	20-20	3	-2 1/2
41	5/22	TOR	H	W	1-0	Kawakami (3-5)	--	21-20	3	-2 1/2
42	5/23	TOR	H	W	4-3	Lowe (6-2)	Johnson (4)	22-20	3	-1 1/2
43	5/24	TOR	H	W	10-2	Bennett (2-1)	Johnson (5), McCann 2 (5)	23-20	T-2	-1 1/2
44	5/25	SF	A	L	2-8	Vazquez (4-4)	--	23-21	3	-1 1/2
45	5/26	SF	A	L	0-4	Medlen (0-2)	--	23-22	3	-2 1/2
46	5/27	SF	A	L	3-6	Kawakami (3-6)	--	23-23	3	-3
47	5/28	ARZ	A	L	2-5	Lowe (6-3)	--	23-24	3	-3 1/2
48	5/29	ARZ	A	W	10-6	Jurrjens (5-2)	Escobar (5)	24-24	3	-3 1/2
49	5/30	ARZ	A	L	2-3 (11)	Bennett (2-2)	--	24-25	3	-4
50	5/31	ARZ	A	W	9-3	Medlen (1-2)	Jones (5), Anderson (1)	25-25	3	-4
51	6/2	CHC	H	W	6-5 (12)	Soriano (1-0)	Anderson (2), Francoeur (4)	26-25	3	-4 1/2
52	6/3	CHC	H	L	2-3 (11)	Bennett (2-2)	--	26-26	3	-5 1/2
53	6/5	MIL	H	L	0-4	Jurrjens (5-3)	--	26-27	3	-6
54	6/6	MIL	H	L	0-3	Vazquez (4-5)	--	26-28	3	-6
55	6/7	MIL	H	W	8-7	O'Flaherty (1-0)	Jones 2 (7)	27-28	3	-6

GAME	DATE	OPP	H/A	W-L	SCORE	W/L PITCHER	ATL HRs	REC	POS	GB
56	6/8	PIT	H	W	7-6 (15)	Medlen (2-2)	Jones (8), McLouth (10), McCann (6)	28-28	3	-5 1/2
57	6/9	PIT	H	W	4-3	Lowe (7-3)	--	29-28	3	-4 1/2
58	6/10	PIT	H	L	2-3	Jurrjens (5-4)	Anderson (3)	29-29	3	-5 1/2
59	6/11	PIT	H	L	1-3	Soriano 1-1)	--	29-30	3	-6 1/2
60	6/12	BAL	A	W	7-2	Hansen (1-0)	Escobar (6), Prado (3)	30-30	3	-5 1/2
61	6/13	BAL	A	L	4-8	O'Flaherty (1-1)	--	30-31	3	-5 1/2
62	6/14	BAL	A	L	2-11	Lowe (7-4)	Ross 2 (5)	30-32	4	-6 1/2
63	6/16	CIN	A	L	2-7	Jurrjens (5-5)	--	30-33	4	-6 1/2
64	6/17	CIN	A	L	3-4	Vazquez (4-6)	Escobar (7)	30-34	4	-6 1/2
65	6/18	CIN	A	W	7-0	Hanson (2-0)	Diaz (3), McLouth (11)	31-34	4	-5 1/2
66	6/19	BOS	A	W	8-2	Kawakami (4-6)	McLouth (12)	32-34	3	-4 1/2
67	6/20	BOS	A	L	0-3	Lowe (7-5)	--	32-35	4	-4 1/2
68	6/21	BOS	A	L	5-6	Bennett (2-4)	--	32-36	4	-4 1/2
69	6/22	CHC	H	W	2-0	Vazquez (5-6)	--	33-36	4	-4
70	6/23	NYY	H	W	4-0	Hanson (3-0)	McCann (7)	34-36	4	-4
71	6/24	NYY	H	L	4-8	Medlen (2-3)	Francoeur (5)	34-37	4	-4
72	6/25	NYY	H	L	7-11	Lowe (7-6)	McCann (8)	34-38	4	-4
73	6/26	BOS	H	L	1-4	Jurrjens (5-6)	Ross (6)	34-39	4	-4
74	6/27	BOS	H	L	0-1	Vazquez (5-7)	--	34-40	4	-5
75	6/28	BOS	H	W	2-1	Hanson (4-0)	Jones (9), Anderson (4)	35-40	4	-5
76	6/30	PHI	H	W	5-4 (10)	Moylan (2-2)	Prado (4)	36-40	4	-4
77	7/1	PHI	H	W	11-1	Jurrjens (6-6)	Diaz (4), Hernandez (1)	37-40	4	-3
78	7/2	PHI	H	W	5-2	Gonzalez (3-0)	Kotchman (3), Anderson (5)	38-40	4	-2
79	7/3	WAS	A	W	9-8	Logan (1-0)	Conrad (1)	39-40	T-3	-2
80	7/4	WAS	A	L	3-5	Gonzalez (3-1)	--	39-41	T-3	-3
81	7/5	WAS	A	L	3-5	Lowe (7-7)	McLouth (13)	39-42	T-3	-4
82	7/6	CHC	A	L	2-4	Jurrjens (6-7)	McLouth (14)	39-43	4	-5
83	7/7	CHC	A	W	2-1	Vazquez (6-7)	--	40-43	3	-4
84	7/8	CHC	A	W	4-1	Kawakami (5-6)	Kotchman (4)	41-43	3	-4
85	7/9	COL	A	L	6-7	Gonzalez (3-2)	--	41-44	3	-5
86	7/10	COL	A	W	4-1	Lowe (8-7)	--	42-44	3	-5
87	7/11	COL	A	W	4-3	Jurrjens (7-7)	--	43-44	3	-5
88	7/12	COL	A	L	7-8	Valdez (0-1)	Conrad(2)	43-45	3	-6
89	7/16	NYM	H	W	5-3	Acosta (1-0)	Escobar (8), Anderson (6)	44-45	3	-6
90	7/17	NYM	H	W	11-0	Jurrjens (8-7)	McCann (9), Prado (5)	45-45	T-2	-6
91	7/18	NYM	H	L	1-5	Kawakami (5-7)	Jones (10)	45-46	3	-6 1/2
92	7/19	NYM	H	W	7-1	Vazquez (7-7)	Escobar (9)	46-46	2	-6 1/2
93	7/20	SF	H	W	11-3	Hanson (5-0)	Anderson (7), Jones (11), Church (3)	47-46	2	-6 1/2
94	7/21	SF	H	W	8-1	Lowe (9-7)	McCann (10)	48-46	2	-6 1/2
95	7/22	SF	H	W	4-2	Jurrjens (9-7)	Escobar (10)	49-46	2	-5 1/2
96	7/23	SF	H	L	1-5	Gonzalez (3-3)	Escobar (11)	49-47	T-2	-6 1/2
97	7/24	MIL	A	W	9-4	Vazquez (8-7)	Prado (6), Jones (12), McLouth (15)	50-47	T-2	-5 1/2
98	7/25	MIL	A	L	0-4	Hanson (5-1)	--	50-48	T-2	-6 1/2
99	7/26	MIL	A	W	10-2	Lowe (10-7)	Kotchman (5), McCann (11), Johnson (6)	51-48	T-2	-6 1/2
100	7/28	FLA	A	L	3-4	Soriano (1-2)	Jones (13), Anderson (8)	51-49	3	-8
101	7/29	FLA	A	L	3-6	Kawakami (5-8)	Kotchman (6), Anderson (9)	51-50	3	-8
102	7/30	FLA	A	W	6-3 (10)	Moylan (3-2)	McCann (12)	52-50	3	-7
103	7/31	LAD	H	L	0-5	Hanson (5-2)	--	52-51	3	-8
104	8/1	LAD	H	W	4-3	Lowe (11-7)	--	53-51	3	-7
105	8/2	LAD	H	L	1-9	Jurrjens (9-8)	--	53-52	3	-7
106	8/3	SD	A	L	2-4	Kawakami (5-9)	LaRoche (14)	53-53	3	-7 1/2
107	8/4	SD	A	W	9-2	Vazquez (9-7)	Prado (7), Diaz (5)	54-53	3	-6 1/2
108	8/5	SD	A	W	6-2	Hanson (6-2)	--	55-53	3	-6 1/2
109	8/6	LAD	A	L	4-5	Soriano (1-3)	Jones (14)	55-54	3	-7 1/2
110	8/7	LAD	A	W	9-5 (12)	Moylan (4-2)	Johnson (7), Church (4)	56-54	3	-6 1/2
111	8/8	LAD	A	W	2-1 (10)	Medlen (3-3)	Johnson (8)	57-54	3	-5 1/2
112	8/9	LAD	A	W	8-2	Vazquez (10-7)	Diaz (6)	58-54	3	-4 1/2



An outfielder, Al Spangler batted .276 in three seasons with the Braves before he was taken by what then were called the Houston Colt 45s in the 1961 expansion draft.

PHOTOS: ATLANTA BRAVES

LEAVING A LEGACY

High School Ballpark That Al Spangler Built In Houston Now Bears His Name

BY BRIAN KNAPP

MINUS A FEW significant speed bumps, life dealt former Braves outfielder Al Spangler a strong hand during the more than 35 years since he put away his spikes and left the major leagues behind.

Spangler, now 76, has served as a high school algebra teacher and baseball coach, worked in the window industry and in mutual funds, and endured two major surgeries – the first a quadruple bypass in 2000, the second a hip replacement procedure last spring.

Still blessed with his quick wit, he plays pepper with Father Time.

"I'm doing little or nothing these days," Spangler said, a hint of humor in his voice. "I'm retired and just hanging around the house. I enjoy watching sports on TV, following my grandchildren and taking care of my house and yard."

Having last played in the majors in 1971, Spangler dabbled in coaching at the minor and major league levels before stepping away from the game. However, he returned to baseball in 1983 when he accepted the head coaching position with the Hargrave High School baseball team in Huffman, Texas, a Houston suburb. He spent 14 years on the bench and in the classroom, coaching future American League All-Star closer Keith Foulke. The school's baseball field now bears Spangler's name as a lasting testament to the impact he had on the program.

"The superintendent of the school board here asked me if I'd consider becoming a high school coach," Spangler said. "Since I had a mathematics degree (from Duke University), I became an algebra teacher and [coached] for 14 years. I got to build a baseball park. I really enjoyed those 14 years."

Spangler still resides in Huffman with his wife of 54 years, Patricia. A hop, skip and jump from the Gulf Coast, they rode out Hurricane Ike – the third-most destructive hurricane to make a United States landfall, behind only Andrew and Katrina – last September and endured more than a week without water or electricity. It marked the second direct hit his property absorbed since he moved to the Houston area in 1962.

"It was kind of sudden, because it came at us at the last minute," Spangler said. "The eye came right over us. We had a few trees down, but we were very lucky."

Active in his 70s, Spangler turned to modern medicine in March, when he underwent hip replacement surgery. The procedure ended years of pain for the former outfielder. Recovery went well.

"The surgery wasn't very difficult," he said. "I went a little too long with it. I had a lot of back and knee pain because of my hip and tried to grin and bear it. It had been giving me trouble for two, two and a half years. The doctor said it was just worn out. I had developed osteoarthritis. I did physical therapy exercises for about a month [after surgery], but I'm up and around, doing things around the house, doing things out in the yard."

Signed by Milwaukee as an amateur free agent in 1954, Spangler spent his first three major league seasons with the Braves (1959-61) after a two-year stint in the United States Army. He compiled a .276 batting average with 52 runs, 59 hits and 12 runs batted in over 175 games with Milwaukee. Spangler never homered as a Brave, and his time with the club was hot and cold.

In fact, his reception in the clubhouse was less than friendly.

"There wasn't any draft," Spangler said. "If you signed for more than $4,000, they had to keep you on the major league roster for two years. I signed and joined the team a few days later. Charlie Grimm was the manager, and he took me around to meet everybody. I don't think anybody spoke to me again for about a month. They all saw me as a young kid who was taking a veteran's spot.

"It was quite a challenge," he added. "I was just happy to be there. I roomed with (Braves Hall of Fame catcher) Del Crandall, and he asked me, 'Do you have to stay here?' The Braves hadn't done something exactly the way they should have when they signed me. The commissioner stepped in and said if I approved it, I could be sent out. I said, 'Heck yeah. I want to play.'"

Spangler made his official debut with Milwaukee in 1959, and his career took another turn when he was chosen by the Houston Colt 45s in the 1961 expansion draft.

"I enjoyed Milwaukee," he said. "I was a member of a great club. I would have liked to have played more, but we were pretty well stacked. My options were up in 1960, and I was mostly a defensive replacement. I tried to learn as much as I could. You learn something every day. In 1961, my contract went to Houston, and I asked, 'Where the heck is Houston?'"

The move breathed new life into his career. Spangler enjoyed his best season in 1962, when he placed in the top 10 in the National League in both triples (9) and walks (70). After spending parts of four seasons with the Houston franchise, he closed his 13-year playing career with the Angels and Cubs. Spangler finished with more career walks (295) than strikeouts (234). A "slap hitter," he had a .262 lifetime batting average and 21 career home runs.

"Just having been able to play 20 years [in the major and minor leagues] was my fondest memory," he said. "I ended up getting 13 years in the pension plan. Not everybody gets to do that. I felt very fortunate."

A father of two and grandfather to three, Spangler – a Philadelphia native – has grown to appreciate the climate the Houston area offers, even if the mercury spikes into the triple digits with regularity during the summer.

"I enjoy the winters," he said. "The heat's starting to get to me a little, but I don't think I could live anywhere that was cold."

HOW DO THEY DO THAT?

INSTALL THE NEW COKE BOTTLE

THE BRAVES unveiled the giant new Coke bottle in Coca-Cola Sky Field on July 16. Getting the bottle - that weighs between 6,000 and 7,000 pounds - to its location 80 feet above Turner Field's playing surface was no easy feat.

The bottle came in five major sections that were each assembled by the Freeman Companies. They were transported by truck from Los Angeles to Atlanta over the course of three days.

A core team of 15 people – comprised of both Braves and Coca-Cola employees – worked on the project. With the help of two giant cranes, about 40 additional laborers managed to get the bottle in place on July 6 and 7.

Just getting the cranes into position required tremendous effort. To avoid damaging the ground surrounding Turner Field, the workers had to lay plywood over the entire path they traveled. They also had to move light fixtures and anything else that was in the way and might possibly be damaged. Once they had everything ready, the cranes lifted each of the five pieces, and the crew put them together.

"It went really smoothly, no problems," said Ellen Lucey, director, sports marketing for Coca-Cola, who oversaw the project. "The bottle itself is really interesting inside. Every piece is numbered. So the five pieces were all welded somewhere else and then came totally intact. And so then it was just those five pieces coming together. I say it only took three days to get here and two days to get up, but it took probably four months to build outside of here."

The new bottle, which stands 49 feet high (seven feet taller than its predecessor), required several days of electrical testing before its first game after the All-Star break. The bottle has six and a half miles of cable inside, and each of its 9,000 LED lights can produce 16.7 million different colors.

The old bottle, which debuted in 1997, was made of more than 11,000 pieces of authentic Atlanta Braves baseball equipment, including 6,680 baseballs, 290 bats and 86 gloves.

- STEVE FALL

ALUMNI NOTES

- The Red Sox cut **John Smoltz** (RHP, 1988-99, 2001-08) Aug. 7. The 42-year-old was designated for assignment, meaning Boston had 10 days to trade or release him. He had a 2-5 record with an 8.32 ERA in eight starts.

- **Carlton Willey** (RHP, 1958-62) died July 20 in Cherryfield, Maine. He was named Rookie of the Year by the Sporting News in 1958 after posting a 9-7 record with the Braves.

- **Phil Niekro** (RHP, 1964-83, '87) will serve as the mater of ceremonies for next year's Knuckle Ball in Houston to honor his brother, the late **Joe Niekro** (RHP, 1973-74), and raise funds for aneurysm research. Phil attended this year's first event July 31. Hall of Famer Joe Morgan was emcee, and the event raised $400,000. Joe died in 2006 at age 61 from a brain aneurysm.

  Niekro also participated in the American Meat Institute's annual Hot Dog Lunch July 22 in Washington, D.C.

- **Kerry Ligtenberg** (RHP, 1997-2002), who was the closer for the independent St. Paul Saints, announced his retirement Aug. 6 due to a knee injury. The Saints signed **Jim Brower** (RHP, 2005) to replace him.

- **Sid Bream** (1B, 1991-93) threw out the first pitch at the State College Spikes game July 18. He was the team's hitting coach last year but is out of baseball this year.

- **Tyler Yates** (RHP, 2006-07) will miss the remainder of the season after undergoing Tommy John on his right elbow. He had been on the disabled list since May 16.

- **Dewayne Wise** (OF, 2004) made national news when he entered the game as a ninth-inning defensive replacement in center field and made a sensational catch to prevent a home run and preserve Mark Buehrle's perfect game (the first in five years and only the 18th in history) for the White Sox July 23.

- **Josh Anderson** (OF, 2008) was designated for assignment by Detroit July 24 and then sent to Kansas City July 30 for cash considerations.

- Houston released **Russ Ortiz** (RHP, 2003-04) July 30.

- The Kansas City organization is trying to convert **Tony Pena Jr.** (INF, 2006), who cleared waivers, from a shortstop to a pitcher due to his continued struggles as a hitter.

- **Chad Paronto** (RHP, 2006-07) was designated for assignment by Houston and then sent outright to Round Rock.

- **Dale Murphy** (OF/1B/C, 1976-90) threw out the first pitch and signed autographs July 23 when the Tennessee Smokies (Cubs) hosted the Braves' Double-A affiliate from Mississippi.

- The Pirates traded **Adam LaRoche** (1B, 2004-06) to the Red Sox for two prospects July 23, and when he was added to the roster July 24, the Red Sox designated **Mark Kotsay** (OF, 2008) for assignment. Kotsay was then traded to the White Sox July 28 in exchange for Brian Anderson. LaRoche was later traded to the Braves.

- **Elmer Dessens** (RHP, 2008) was designated for assignment by the Mets July 30. He cleared waivers and was sent to Triple-A Buffalo.

- The Red Sox claimed **Chris Woodward** (INF, 2007) off waivers from Seattle.

- Tampa Bay claimed **Russ Springer** (RHP, 1998-99) off waivers from Oakland.

- The Cubs traded **Jose Ascanio** (RHP, 2007) and two other players to Pittsburgh July 30 in exchange for pitchers Tom Gorzelanny and John Grabow.

BIRTHDAYS

SEPTEMBER

1ST	RICO CARTY (70)
	CRAIG SKOK (62)
3RD	DAVE CAMPBELL (58)
	TOM THOBE (40)
	CHAD FOX (39)
4TH	DOYLE ALEXANDER (59)
	JORDAN SCHAFER (23)
6TH	MIKE THOMPSON (60)
	GREG OLSON (49)
	FRANK BROOKS (31)
7TH	SERGIO VALDEZ (45)
	DARREN BRAGG (40)
8TH	LOU SLEATER (83)
	STEVE HARGAN (67)
9TH	MIKE HAMPTON (37)
	KYLE DAVIES (26)
10TH	PRESTON HANNA (55)
	NICK GREEN (31)
	DANYS BAEZ (32)
11TH	MATT DESALVO (29)
12TH	STAN LOPATA (84)
	TRENCH DAVIS (49)
13TH	MIKE FISCHLIN (54)
	DENNY NEAGLE (41)
14TH	JOE WINKELSAS (36)
	GEORGE LOMBARD (34)
15TH	GAYLORD PERRY (71)
	DON COLLINS (57)
16TH	ROGER MORET (60)
17TH	ORLANDO CEPEDA (72)
	BOBBY WINE (71)
18TH	BRENT LILLIBRIDGE (26)
19TH	VERN BENSON (85)
	JOE DAWLEY (38)
	JOEY DEVINE (26)
20TH	RICH MORALES (66)
	RORIC HARRISON (63)
	DAVE GALLAGHER (49)
22ND	KEN ASPROMONTE (78)
	LOU JOHNSON (75)
23RD	WOODY WOODWARD (67)
	JIM MORRISON (57)
	BRIAN ASSELSTINE (56)
24TH	MIKE KRSNICH (78)
	ROD GILBREATH (57)
	JIM ACKER (51)
	BERNARD GILKEY (43)
	JESSE GARCIA (36)
25TH	JIM WESSINGER (54)
	GLENN HUBBARD (52)
	RAY HOLBERT (39)
26TH	DOUG SISK (52)
	DAVE MARTINEZ (45)
	MATT MURRAY (39)
28TH	CHARLEY KERFELD (46)
29TH	HOWIE BEDELL (74)

ChopTalk
THE OFFICIAL MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE ATLANTA BRAVES

SUBSCRIPTIONS
P.O. Box 81247
Conyers, Ga. 30013-9247
PHONE 1-877-655-CHOP (2467)
WEB Braves.com/choptalk

PUBLISHER
GARY CARUSO, President
Wonderdog Publishing, Inc.

EDITORIAL
EDITOR: Gary Caruso
COLUMNISTS: Jay Busbee, Ryan Church, Bobby Cox, Mycal Jones, Patty Rasmussen, Ken Rosenthal (FoxSports.com), Frank Wren
REPORTERS: Bill Ballew, Jay Busbee, Jon Cooper, Steve Fall, Ray Glier, Melanie D.G. Kaplan, Brian Knapp, Patty Rasmussen
PHOTOGRAPHERS: Patty Rasmussen, Carlos Restrepo, Bill Setliff, Allison Shirreffs, Walter Victor, Rodger Wood
CARTOONIST: Johnny Sajem

PRODUCTION
ART DIRECTOR: Clark Odom

ADVERTISING
SALES:
Scott Rickles 800-929-4098
Dan Tomkiewicz 770-640-1681
FLORIDA SALES
Carmel Modica 850-231-3146

PRINTER
Publisher's Press

SUBSCRIBER SERVICES
McMillen Communications

NEWSSTAND OPERATIONS
Curtis Circulation Company

BUSINESS OPERATIONS
Rob Calcutta

CHANGE OF ADDRESS
Send address changes or corrections to: ChopTalk, P.O. Box 81247, Conyers, Ga. 30013-9247 or call 1-877-655-CHOP (2467) or visit braves.com/choptalk.

OFFICE OF PUBLICATION
12829 Trinity Dr.
Stafford, TX 77477-4214
PHONE 1-877-655-CHOP (2467)
E-MAIL Letters@ChopTalkonline.com

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY
It is the policy of this magazine and its publisher:
1. To contract with individuals on the basis of their qualifications and with assurance of equal opportunity and treatment,regardless of race, color, creed, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, national origin or handicap.
2. To not knowingly accept any advertisement which implies any preference, limitation or discrimination based on race, color, creed, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, national origin or handicap.

ATLANTA BRAVES STAFF
PUBLIC RELATIONS
BRAD HAINJE - Director of MediaRelations
BETH MARSHALL - Director of Public Relations
ANDY PRESSLEY - Publications Manager
Adam Liberman, Meagan Swingle, Adrienne Midgley

GARY CARUSO

EDITOR & PUBLISHER

SPANISH EXPEDITION

THE CANARY ISLANDS? What in the world are the Braves - and ChopTalk - doing in the Canary Islands?

That's certainly a legitimate question you may be asking after seeing that a great deal of this issue is dedicated to the stories and photos Patty Rasmussen brought back from that distant outpost of Spanish territory just off the northwest corner of Africa.

Though it may be a while before a Cy Young Award winner or an MVP is discovered and signed at the Braves' new European Academy, the fact is that it could happen someday. More importantly, the Braves are the first Major League Baseball team to stake a claim in Europe.

Since ChopTalk subscribers - the best Braves fans in the world - are more interested than any other fans in the future, as well as the present, of this organization, we feel it is a story of great significance. That's because it shows just how committed the Braves are to building strength in player personnel for now and years into the future.

Perhaps as much as anything the franchise has done in recent years, this new venture illustrates from a unique and compelling perspective the importance of player development and the need to try to stay a step or two ahead of the other 29 teams.

Many people in the Braves' organization, including Bobby Cox, didn't even know about the European endeavor until they heard about ChopTalk's planned coverage. Still others undoubtedly didn't know until picking up this issue. But player development is the most critical factor in the Braves' quest for future success, which is why we pursued this story and why we've always devoted extensive coverage to scouting, signing and the development of new talent.

Speaking of talent, many of you probably didn't see the end of the Aug. 8 game in Los Angeles, a 2-1 win in 10 innings. Those West Coast night games can be a challenge!

Hopefully, you at least saw highlights of the game. If not, you owe it to yourself to visit braves.com and locate the page with coverage of that game, because it includes video of Yunel Escobar's game-ending play.

It's tough to imagine an infielder making a better game-ending play in such a crucial situation, and it helps show why Escobar is so valuable to the Braves. Read Frank Wren's comments about the play on page 21.

Just the night before, it was Escobar who delivered the go-ahead hit in a 12-inning win over the Dodgers. He is an exciting talent with his bat, glove and arm, and will soon be All-Star caliber (if he's not already).

The Braves worked themselves into playoff contention with improved hitting. The pitching has always been there. Home run production increased, and at this writing, the Braves ranked 10th in the NL with 104 home runs. Actually, no team other than the Phillies (155) was that far ahead of Atlanta in home runs.

But the great equalizer is that the Braves ranked first in the majors in fewest home runs allowed (77). The Dodgers were a fairly distant second with 88.

Those are important stats to keep in mind. If you tend to think that the Braves don't hit for enough power to make a run at October glory, think again. Because the Braves' pitchers give up so few home runs, the lineup *does* hit enough of them.

Or as pitching coach Roger McDowell said when asked which was more important - home runs hit or home runs allowed, "The less home runs you give up, the less you have to hit."

Simple theory - and very valid.

It seems everywhere I turn, someone wants to know, "Can the Braves make the playoffs?" At this point, there's no doubt that they can. The appropriate question is, "Will they make the playoffs?" No one has that answer, but it's going to be fun seeing them make a run at it.

As the season wears on, it becomes more and more obvious - as we've said all year - what a great job Wren has done (and continues to do) in reshaping the team and providing tweaks to the roster when they're needed.

THIS ISSUE OF CHOPTALK was mailed Aug. 20. The October issue will be mailed Sept. 22.

BEYOND BASEBALL

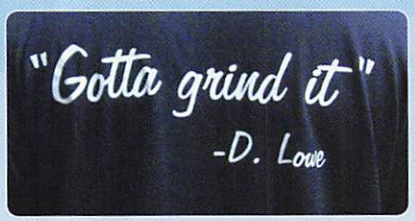
BY **PATTY RASMUSSEN**

PATTY RASMUSSEN

David Ross models the t-shirt many of the players and coaches are wearing that signifies their collective determination to make a common push for the post-season in the second half.

FASHION KINGS

THIS SEASON'S most coveted shirt is the navy blue "Gotta grind it" tee with white lettering worn by the Braves players and coaches. The t-shirt features an old-fashioned, hand-cranked meat grinder on the front with the words, "Gotta grind it, - D. Lowe" on the back. The phrase was uttered by **Derek Lowe** during a team meeting prior to the first game after the All-Star break and then appropriated as an un-official team mantra. An enterprising and unnamed teammate stepped up and had the t-shirts made for all the players and coaches. Most players declined to offer any background on the origin of the t-shirt, citing potential Kangaroo Court charges, but catcher **David Ross** boldly modeled it, front and back, for ChopTalk. "It's ironic, because after D-Lowe said the whole 'Gotta grind it' thing, we started playing badly. So, when we got the t-shirts everyone thought it was a joke," said Ross.



PETER MOYLAN and his girlfriend, **Mandy Coupel**, spent the All-Star break, July 13-15, visiting Las Vegas. Moylan said they spent a good deal of time simply relaxing by the pool, but they managed to ride the roller coasters at the Stratosphere hotel, visit Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum, and enjoy a meal at Tao, an Asian inspired bistro and nightclub at the Venetian Hotel...

General manager **Frank Wren**'s two oldest sons, twins **Kyle** and **Colby**, juniors at Landmark Christian School (LCS) in Newnan, Ga., are starting to look at colleges, and colleges are starting to look at them as baseball prospects! Among the names already in the cap are Georgia Tech, in Atlanta, and Auburn University in Auburn, Alabama. Fellow Peachtree City residents **Tim** and **Kim Hudson**, who both attended Auburn and whose children also attend LCS, are lobbying heavily on behalf of their alma mater!...

Jessica Carlyle, wife of pitcher **Buddy Carlyle**, was recently named to the Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference's (RMAC) All-Time Women's Basketball Team and was recognized during the RMAC's Centennial Celebration July 11, at the Cheyenne Mountain Resort in Colorado Springs. Jessica was a first team All-RMAC player three times during her college career at the University of Nebraska-Kearney. She graduated in 1999 and immediately went to Holland, where she played one season of professional basketball in Lieshout, for a team called Dr. Foot's. "On the totem pole of women's professional basketball, it was definitely near the bottom," said Jessica. "But it was a dream of mine to play, and it was awesome! I loved living in Holland and actually lived in 's-Hertogenbosch. . . a beautiful city!" Jessica and Buddy were able to attend the event since the Braves were in Colorado for a four-game series with the Rockies...

The Braves wives hosted a baby shower for **Lauren Johnson**, wife of **Kelly Johnson**, at Turner Field. Among the attendees were **Jamie Reyes** (**Jo-Jo**), **Ashley McCann** (**Brian**), **Jessica Carlyle** (**Buddy**), **Yohanna Infante** (**Omar**), **Leslee Diaz** (**Matt**), **Ronnie Snitker** (coach **Brian Snitker**), **Meredith Sammons** (Gwinnett Braves catcher **Clint**), **Catie Francoeur** (former Brave **Jeff**) and **Erin Krall**, fiancée of former Brave **Casey Kotchman**. The Johnsons are expecting their first child, a boy, in early December... **Ashley McCann** and **Nicole Jones**, wife of former centerfielder Andruw Jones, hosted a baby shower for **Heidi DeRosa**, wife of former Braves infielder **Mark DeRosa**. The DeRosas are expecting their second child, a boy, in early November. They have a daughter, **Gabby** (6). The DeRosas make their off-season home in the Atlanta suburb of Suwanee...

Ashley McCann, **Lauren Johnson** and **Leslee Diaz** made the road trip to New York when the Braves played the Mets, Aug. 18-20, giving them the opportunity to catch up with **Catie Francoeur** (**Jeff**), see a play on Broadway, and watch a little baseball...

Due to the broadcast schedule, FOX and ESPN telecasts back-to-back on Aug. 1 and 2, **Joe Simpson** and his wife, **Kathy**, were able to leave for the West Coast a couple days before the team arrived, Aug. 3, in San Diego, giving them two extra days to visit their daughter, **Meg**, who lives in the Los Angeles area...

Leslee Diaz (**Matt**) with son **Nathan** and daughter **Anna**, and **Jaena Norton** (**Greg**) with son **Jace** and daughter **Ciana**, traveled to Florida to meet with their husbands dur-

BUDDY BALL

SPECIAL

BUDDY CARLYLE (above) used the All-Star break to pass along some baseball knowledge to the next generation. He held an impromptu two-day clinic, July 14 and 15, at a local park near his home in Peachtree City for his son, **Carter**, and five other boys. The boys ranged in age from 6 to 10 years old and worked on pitching, hitting and fielding. A couple of the other dads lent a hand, and the group enjoyed a visit to Turner Field on July 16 when the Braves hosted the Mets the first game after the break.

ing the three-day series, July 27-30, with an additional off day...

If summer vacation has to end, it might as well end in sunny Florida, according to **Gloria McDowell**, wife of pitching coach **Roger McDowell**. "The family off day in Florida was heavenly," she said. "(Daughters) **Amanda** and **Rachel** took their first ride on a Jet Ski with their dad - too much fun! It was a terrific day of building sand castles and swimming in the ocean." The start of school (Aug. 3) meant Gloria and the girls were unable to make the West Coast trip, but Gloria's parents drove up to San Diego from Palm Springs to see Roger...

Tim and **Kim Hudson** made a family vacation out of his two rehab starts with the Myrtle Beach Pelicans. The Hudsons and their children - **Kennedie**, **Tess**, and **Kade** - spent six days, July 18-24, at Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, visiting the beach, water park, and riding go carts. "I love that place," said Kim. "They're so nice there."...

When the Hudsons returned home, Kennedie celebrated her eighth birthday July 31 with a party of friends and family in one of the suites at the Gwinnett Braves stadium where Tim was making another rehab start. Kim invited **Les Morgan**, his children **Heidi** and **Will**, and six of their friends to be her guests at the July 31 Braves vs. Dodgers game at Turner Field. Les lost his wife, **Missy**, and young son, **Ryan**, to cancer within days of each other. Kim came to know the family through her work with cancer-related charities in Atlanta. Because Kim was unable to attend the game that night, **Jessica Carlyle** stepped in and handled the hostess duties, meeting the Morgan family and friends prior to the game and handing out Braves goodies and making sure they had prime seats on the field for the post-game Friday Night Fireworks show...

Jair Jurrjens said the Pabao Little League team from his hometown of Willemstad, Curacao, was once again participating in the Little League World Series in Williamsport, Pa., and went on record as saying that if asked to throw out a ceremonial first pitch at one of their games, he wanted to do it. The Series was played Aug. 21-30 and included 16 teams from around the world. Last year, Jurrjens received permission from the Braves to leave the team for a day in order to throw out the first pitch prior to the Little League World Series game between Curacao and Matamoros, Mexico.

SPECIAL

Bubble blowers (L-R) Buddy Carlyle, Brian McCann and David Ross came up short in competition against Madeline (front), from Acworth, Ga., of the Rally Foundation.

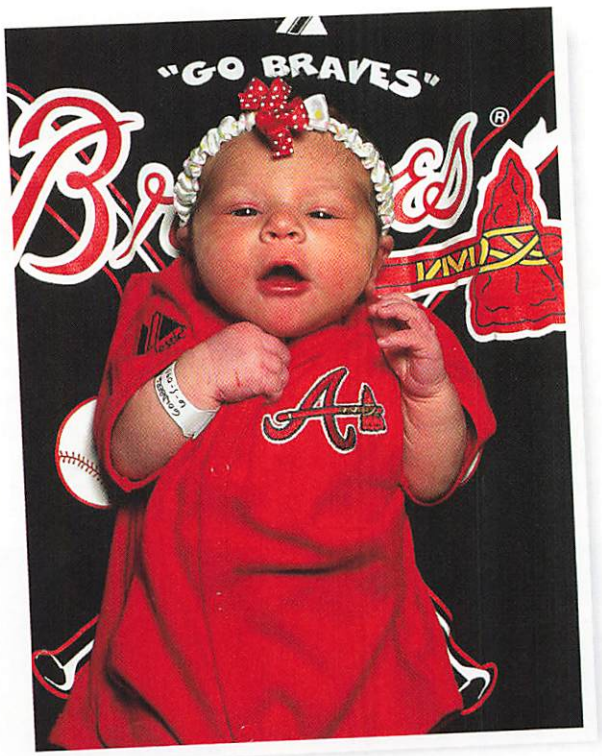
BLOW HARDS

THE RALLY FOUNDATION for Childhood Cancer Research held its annual bubble gum blowing competition July 16 at the CityScape patio at Turner Field with Rally Foundation spokesperson **Brian McCann** and teammates **Buddy Carlyle** and **David Ross**. The three players competed against a couple of "Rally kids" to see who could blow the biggest bubble. McCann lead the Braves bubble blowers, contributing an 8-inch bubble to Ross' 6-inch bubble and Carlyle's 5 1/2-inch bubble. But it was a Rally kid named Chris who won the day with an 8 1/2-inch bubble.

TALKIN' CHOP

LETTERS & PHOTOS FROM OUR READERS

WHETHER YOU'RE HAVING FUN AT TURNER FIELD, EXPERIENCING A CLOSE ENCOUNTER WITH YOUR FAVORITE BRAVES PLAYER, OR JUST SHOWING OFF YOUR COLLECTION OF BRAVES STUFF OR TRYING ON YOUR NEW BRAVES SHIRT, WE WANT TO HEAR ABOUT IT AND SEE A PICTURE.



LIFE'S GUIDELINES

After submitting pictures from our wedding day to ChopTalk (Jan. '08), we wanted to share with you our newest addition - Reese Goldberg.

It's very important to us as her parents and huge Braves fans to have her learn the "Braves Ways." Here are some characteristics that make the Braves such a great organization and things we plan to instill in our daughter:

B - Bring her up to be a future leader like Bobby Cox.
R - Respect everyone around you.
A - Always be the best you can be.
V - Victories are better than losses.
E - Everyone gives back to their communities.
S - Strive to have fun everyday!

We are looking forward to taking Reese to her first Braves game in Miami in late August, so she can meet the Braves firsthand.

RYAN & REGAN GOLDBERG
Bonita Springs, Fla.

A DAY TO TREASURE

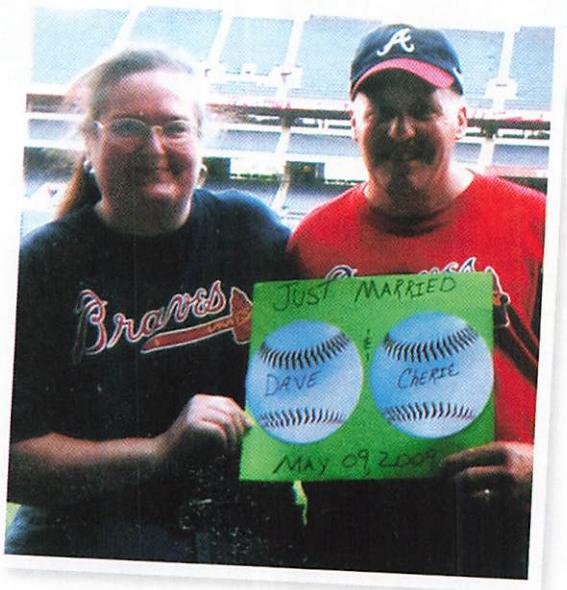
This is a photo of my grandmother - 82-year-old Dessie Pierce of Albertville, Alabama - at her very first Braves game. She has been a Braves fan for my entire life. I remember falling asleep on her couch to the Braves playing on television when I was a little girl. She watches every game, but I thought she would really enjoy seeing them play at The Ted, so I got tickets to take her to the July 18 game vs. the Mets. Even though the Braves did not win that day, she really enjoyed herself. She watched every play very intently and even did the Tomahawk Chop. She was also excited that she got to see Chipper hit a home run. She left Turner Field that day an even bigger Braves fan than she already was, and I left with a memory of a beautiful day spent at the ballpark watching the team we love with my favorite Braves fan.

AMANDA CHILDRESS
Albertville, Ala.

NEWLYWEDS

Our first game as a married couple at Turner Field was May 15. The Braves won, 4-3, in the bottom of the ninth, of course!

DAVE & CHERIE DESPAGNA,
Anniston, Ala.



CHOPTALK AND THE ATLANTA BRAVES SUPPORT OUR TROOPS

ICING ON THE CAKE

Since I am a dedicated Braves fan, my family celebrates my birthday at a Braves game every year. This was the 10th consecutive year and my 85th birthday! What could be nicer than spending the evening with my children, grandchildren, great grandchildren and friends at a Braves game? The Braves won the game, and that was the icing on my birthday cake! I am a long-time ChopTalk subscriber and look forward to its arrival each month.

MILDRED GREEN
Jonesboro, Ga.

FAN IN TRAINING

Here's 11-month old Jaxsen Demos of Fishers, Indiana, all set to go see his first Braves game! Play Ball!

TED & FELISA DEMOS
Fishers, Indiana

SHARE YOUR BRAVES FEVER!

WRITE TO US

Talkin' Chop c/o ChopTalk
P.O. Box 81247
Conyers, Ga. 30013-9247

Letters@ChopTalkonline.com

Letters and photos chosen for publication are subject to editing, and photos cannot be returned. Computer printouts of photos cannot be published. High-resolution files preferred. ChopTalk reserves the right to use letters and photos for promotional and advertising purposes.

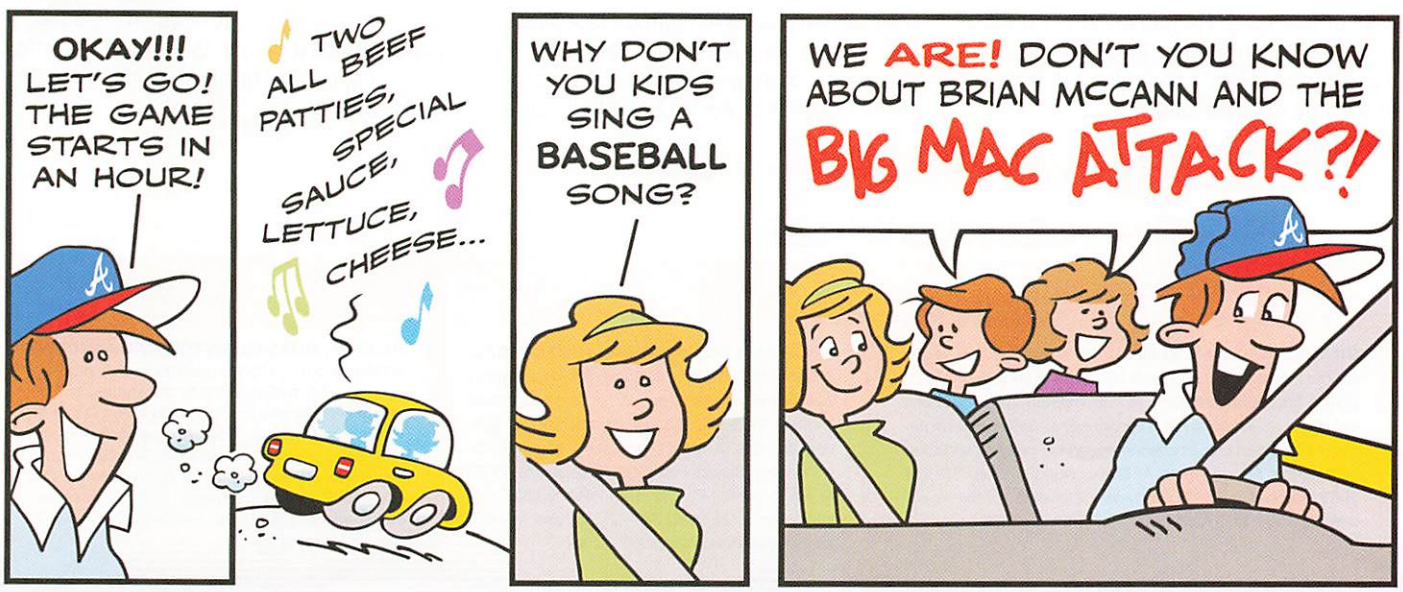
WRITE THE BRAVES

Atlanta Braves
P.O. Box 4064
Atlanta, Ga. 30302

For the Braves players, Bobby Cox, the coaches, broadcasters, or members of the front office.

If you request a response, be sure to include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Never send anything of value that you want returned. This is no guarantee of a reply.

McSWAT


OKAY!!! LET'S GO! THE GAME STARTS IN AN HOUR!
TWO ALL BEEF PATTIES, SPECIAL SAUCE, LETTUCE, CHEESE...
WHY DON'T YOU KIDS SING A BASEBALL SONG?
WE ARE! DON'T YOU KNOW ABOUT BRIAN McCANN AND THE BIG MAC ATTACK?!

THE WONDER FROM DOWN UNDER

BY GARY CARUSO

TOMMY JOHN surgery has a new poster pitcher, and his name is Peter Moylan.

Moylan not only bounced back from the elbow reconstruction procedure in record time, but he's also using his rebuilt arm at a record pace never before approached by another pitcher in Braves franchise history.

Through Aug. 9, Moylan led the majors with 63 appearances (56 percent of the Braves' 112 games). That put him on pace to appear in 91 games, which would shatter the franchise record of 84 set by Chris Reitsma in 2004.

Answering Bobby Cox's repeated calls is one thing, but the 30-year-old Australian sidewinder is doing so with amazing effectiveness. In spite of appearing in more games than any other pitcher in the majors, he hadn't given up a single home run. He's just the second pitcher in history (Randy Choate, Arizona in 2004) to appear in 49 or more games before the All-Star break without allowing a homer.

At this writing, Moylan hadn't even allowed a run in 14 outings (13 1/3 innings) since the All-Star break. He had 14 strikeouts in those 14 games and was holding opposing batters to a .191 average.

Can someone say, "Comeback Player of the Year?"

When asked if perhaps Moylan was getting a little too much work considering he had surgery last May 8, Roger McDowell replied, "He hasn't been overused. Obviously, Bobby knows where he was last year at this time. He has great work ethic, and he was committed to get back as soon as possible. He's good about letting us know if he needs a day off."

Though he missed nearly all of last season due to Tommy John surgery, Peter Moylan leads the majors in appearances and had yet to allow a home run.

And how many times has that happened?

Hint: The answer matches the number of home runs Moylan has yielded this year - zero.

"It is amazing how many games I've been in," admitted Moylan, who led all major league rookies in 2007 in games (80), ERA (1.80) and opponents' batting average (.208). "Roger and Skip (Cox) ask me every day how I feel. Of course, I'm very competitive, and I want to pitch. If I need a day, I'll tell them, but I haven't had to do that yet. Knock wood."

After his heavy workload in '07, Moylan appeared in just seven games last season, and though he had a 1.59 ERA and .217 opponents' batting average, he had to shut down for the year April 12 and had surgery a month later. On April 8 of this season - exactly 11 months after surgery - he walked to the mound in Philadelphia.

Of course, the initial results left much to be desired. The Phillies knocked him around for four runs before he could get an out. Two days later, he gave up another run to Washington without recording an out. Two appearances for five runs without retiring a batter results in an ERA of "infinity." In his third game, however, he struck out the side against Washington and he finally had an ERA - even if it was 45.00!

"To be honest, after not retiring a batter in my first two outings, I wondered if I was coming back too early. I was second-guessing myself," Moylan admitted. "But I was mainly struggling with mechanics. I was extremely slow going to home plate, and I had a different arm angle. It was a whole range of things the first month. Once I got a few outs, the mechanics started to fall into place."

Moylan says he's not quite back to where he was before the surgery, but his effectiveness would seem to indicate otherwise.

"I'm about back to where I was. My confidence is there, and that's huge," he said. "It's just that my velocity isn't quite there. That takes 18 months to two years. But I'm confident that every time I go out there, I can get the job done.

"It would be cool to lead the league in games, but I'd rather lead in some other stats - especially the number of games this team wins."

FAN CLUBS

BRAVES 400 FAN CLUB

BRAVES 400 FAN CLUB is the official fan club of the Atlanta Braves. It is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting baseball at all levels. Annual membership is $25 and includes a newsletter and the opportunity to participate in activities such as road trips, luncheons, the annual banquet, and charitable events. Send payment to: Braves 400 Fan Club, P.O. Box 7689, Atlanta, Ga. 30309. For more information, call the organization's hotline at (770) 416-4539 or visit braves400.org.

MILWAUKEE BRAVES HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

MILWAUKEE BRAVES HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION is a non-profit organization that promotes the memory of the Milwaukee Braves (1953-65). Annual membership is $25 and includes a newsletter. Send payment to: Milwaukee Braves Historical Association, 6700 N. Range Line Rd., Glendale, Wisc. 53209. For information, call (414) 347-1212 or visit milwaukeebraveshistoricalassociation.com.

BOSTON BRAVES HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

BOSTON BRAVES HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION is a non-profit organization dedicated to keeping alive the memory of the Braves in the city where the franchise began in 1871 and that it represented through 1952. Annual membership is $15 and includes a newsletter. Send payment to: Boston Braves Historical Association, P.O. Box 5668, Marlboro, Mass. 01752. For more information, call (508) 485-1423 or visit Boston-braves.com.

VISIT TODAY!

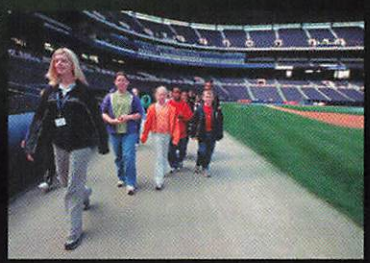
THE IVAN ALLEN JR. BRAVES MUSEUM HALL of FAME 1871 • 1953 • 1966

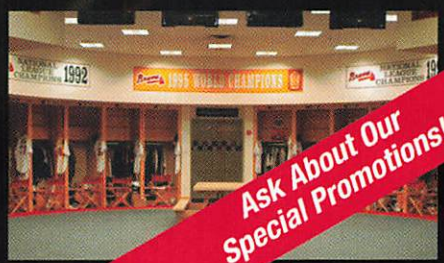
Visit the Braves Museum & Hall of Fame at Turner Field and view more than 600 Braves artifacts and photographs on display. See items from the team's early years in Boston (1871-1952) to Milwaukee (1953-65) to Atlanta (1966-present), including Hank Aaron's 715th home run bat and ball, the 1995 World Series trophy and much more.

TOUR TURNER FIELD 404-614-2311

Take a one-hour guided tour of Turner Field to many areas off limits during games, such as the press box, clubhouse, dugout and the SunTrust Club. Group and school tours are offered year-round, including specialized tours on the subjects of math, social studies, art and careers in sports. Call 404-614-2311.

HOME OF THE BRAVES TURNER FIELD



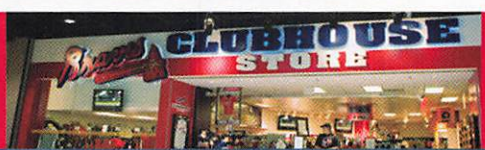


Ask About Our Special Promotions!

2009 HOME GAMES BRAVES CLUBHOUSE STORE TO OFFER FANS A CHANCE TO WIN A REPLICA JERSEY

"WALK OFF WEDNESDAYS" PROMOTION

WEDNESDAYS ONLY! PURCHASE PLAYER TEES AT CNN CENTER



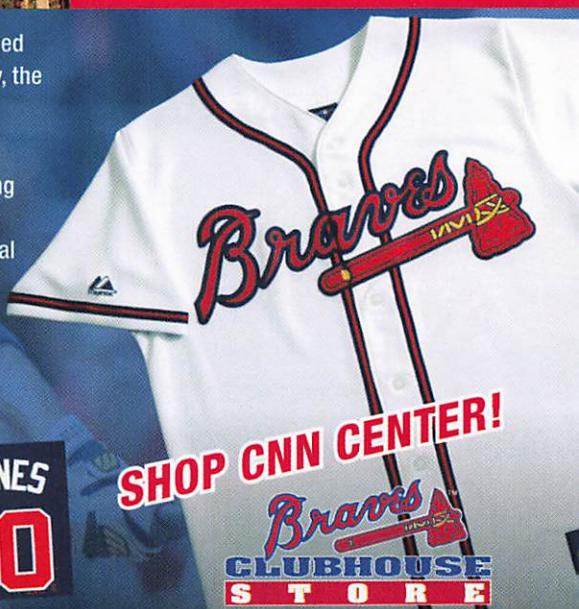
FANS COULD WIN A BRAVES REPLICA JERSEY

Each Wednesday home game of the 2009 season will provide fans an opportunity to win a replica jersey. Fans can purchase a specially-priced name and number t-shirt of select Braves players at the Braves Clubhouse Store at CNN Center.

$3 OFF PLAYER NAME AND NUMBER TEES ANY WEDNESDAY HOME GAME IN 2009

If the player whose t-shirt was purchased hits a walk-off home run that same day, the fan will receive a replica jersey.

This promotion will take place during Wednesday home Braves games starting April 15th for the 2009 Season. Certain restrictions may apply. Subject to official rules. For complete rules and an entire selection of Braves player t-shirts, visit the Braves Clubhouse Store.



SHOP CNN CENTER!

Braves CLUBHOUSE STORE

We've Outfitted The Braves, We Can Do The Same For You

Visit The Braves Clubhouse Store at CNN Center, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily or call 404-523-5854 for information.

Every Season, Endless Reasons To Come Coast Awhile, Atlanta!

Brunswick & The Golden Isles of Georgia. Unhurried. Unspoiled. Unmatched for countless diversions and pleasures. Vast marshlands, winding rivers, and ribbon-smooth beaches. Centuries-old oaks draped in moss. The stunning beauty of this corner of Georgia is legendary.

History is alive here. The flags of five nations have fluttered in these salt breezes marking a diverse heritage that lingers today. An English fort, antebellum plantation ruins, Victorian homes–400 years of history. And getting better with age.

Recreation for every taste and tempo. Miles of fairways fronting 216 holes of golf, acres of tennis courts. Plus casino/cruise ship, sport fishing, boating, sailing and endless bike paths offering discoveries around every bend.

Mainland Brunswick greets with quaint charm. The architecture of Old Town, fleets of shrimp boats along its waterfront, antique shops. And so much more.

Cross the fabled Marshes of Glynn and behold The Golden Isles. St. Simons Island, Sea Island, Little St. Simons Island and Jekyll Island. Beaches so perfect for swimming, strolling, shelling, sunning. A mecca for shoppers, pure paradise for golf and tennis lovers. Historic sites by the dozens, fresh seafood by the pound. And accommodations of every description from budget to luxury to camping and rental cottages.

Where I-95 bends toward the sea, pull off and coast awhile. The hospitality, like the climate, welcomes year-round. Brunswick & The Golden Isles. Enjoy them each. Explore them all.

For a free vacation planning guide: 1-800-933-COAST (2627)

BRUNSWICK AND THE GOLDEN ISLES OF GEORGIA

ST. SIMONS ISLAND • SEA ISLAND
LITTLE ST. SIMONS ISLAND • JEKYLL ISLAND

BGICVB.COM